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THESIS

The Development of the Office of Prime Minister in England during the Eighteenth Century

by

ALBERT REID RAYMOND

(B.M., Boston University, 1931)

submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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The Development of the Office of Prime Minister during the Eighteenth Century.

The Cabinet, which is the distinguishing feature of the English Constitution, the link which connects the legislative and executive departments of government, producing a harmony and symmetry of governmental action not to be found elsewhere, is still unknown to English law. Today the keystone of the Cabinet arch is the Prime Minister, and although all members of the Cabinet are on an equal footing, yet he, as the head of the Cabinet, occupies a position which so long as it lasts, is one of exceptional power and authority. His official position is usually that of First Lord of the Treasury; as Prime Minister he has no more legal status than the Cabinet. The office seems to be peculiarly English in that it has evolved, like most of their political institutions, by the process of trial and error. It is our aim to trace this evolution during the eighteenth century, which saw the birth of the office, its narrow escape from extinction, and toward the end of the century its definite establishment.

It seems wise to explain in a general way the ground to be covered. There are many phases of this subject to be considered, of which the following are the most important; the Prime Minister's relation to the King, his relation to the House of Commons, his dependence upon party, and his degree of authority in the Cabinet. We may simplify the whole problem by dividing the century into three periods; the first from 1700 to 1770, the second from 1770 to 1783, and the last from 1783 to 1803.

During the first of these periods there seems to have been a more or less definite progress in the crystallization of the functions and powers which are the common property of the modern Prime Minister. From 1770 to 1783, when George III was at the height of his power, this process was ~~more or less~~ interrupted. Finally, from 1783 to the end of the century, we will attempt to show the reëstablishment which took place of the customs upon which the office rests.

A. The Period from 1700 to 1770

I Cabinet Development in General before 1721

Although Sir Robert Walpôle is generally considered to have been the first Prime Minister, it will be advantageous to review briefly the Cabinet system as it functioned between 1700 and 1721. In the reign of Queen Anne the Cabinet may be taken to mean the group of Privy Councillors with whom the Queen consulted on affairs of State. She saw clearly that party government meant the surrender of the Royal personality, and with this in mind she appointed her first ministry with the express purpose of having a certain difference of opinion among her Ministers; thus, her Cabinets were not divided by accident, but by principle. This is the reason that she refused in 1706 to appoint a united Whig Ministry at the suggestion of Godolphin.[1] But even now, the feeling was developing that if the First Minister were not to appoint his colleagues, he was at least to be consulted in their appointment. Nevertheless, in this matter Godolphin yielded absolutely to the Queen. Even at that time he was much blamed for submitting to such indignity. So we see that the office of Prime Minister had already begun to emerge, at least in the eyes of a few.

By the death of Queen Anne, then (1714), a Cabinet was in existence, though not explicitly defined, or generally accepted. The choice of the Crown as to its confidential servants was but vaguely limited, and the Sovereign still governed through the Ministers, rather than the Ministers through the Crown.

1 Her leading Minister.

There was as yet, of course, no idea of party government as it is now carried on, and coalition Cabinets were normal rather than abnormal.[1] Ministerial responsibility within the Cabinet was unknown. The Ministerial responsibility which binds the modern Cabinet requires that all members of the Cabinet be of the same opinion on matters of governmental policy; in other words, all the Ministers of the present day Cabinet present a united front on political measures, at least in public. If a Minister does not approve the policy of the Prime Minister and the remainder of the Cabinet, his only alternative is to resign his post. Likewise, the responsibility of the Cabinet to Parliament was not yet understood. By this is meant simply the unwritten law by which the Cabinet goes out of power when a measure proposed by it is defeated in the House of Commons. This Cabinet responsibility to Parliament did not come in for another generation.

II. Office of Prime Minister Arises because of Necessity.

The office of Prime Minister evolved naturally, as did the power of the Cabinet; that is, there was no definite recognition of it, even in the minds of the most far-sighted statesmen who themselves were unconsciously establishing the office. The coming of the House of Hanover to the English throne made certain that this peculiar progress would go on.

1 By a Coalition Cabinet is meant a Cabinet containing Ministers from more than one party.

George I was a German, and had no desire to adapt himself to his new Kingdom. The Constitutional development then destroying Royal prerogative caused him no great concern. Further, George I knew no English. This fact is important, because the difficulties which the first of the Hanoverians had in understanding English ways and methods, and his lack of interest in learning the ins and outs of the English Constitution needed only this added difficulty of talking things over freely with his Ministers to make him quite willing to turn over to them the ordinary running of the Government without interference, and even the determination of policy in many cases where German politics were not directly concerned. George II was not much more occupied with English political questions than was George I. This inability of the two foreign Kings to govern necessitated a rapid development in the office of Prime Minister that business might be transacted to advantage either in Cabinet or Parliament.

One very definite way in which these German Kings assisted in the development of the Prime Minister's office was in their failure to preside over the meetings of the Cabinet. For some time after the Cabinet had been accepted as a part of the Government, the Sovereign was its only superior. Indeed, Queen Anne held a Cabinet every Sunday at which she herself was present. In 1714, however, probably due more than anything else to the fact that he did not understand the language in which its deliberations were carried on, George I stopped attending the Cabinet meetings, and generally relinquished his place in actual government. So, as a leader was needed, a sort of

presidency in the cabinet developed in one of its own members; in other words, a mere chairmanship eventually developed into a Prime Ministership.

Another factor in the development of the power of the Cabinet, and incidentally of its leader, was the long period of Whig supremacy. For fifty years there was an almost exclusive employment of the Whig party in the important offices of State. George I was blamed for initiating this state of affairs. He could not have done otherwise, however, as he had come in as a protégé of the Whigs and any introduction of Tories into his Cabinet would have been unsafe. Had the Tories been in power, the prerogative of the Crown might have been maintained for some time, but the Whigs were those whose fundamental principle it was to maintain a steady opposition to what they considered an abuse of the Royal Power. They came to believe that almost any direct use of this power was an abuse, and that only as it was delegated to responsible Ministers could it be advantageous to the State. This continual suppression of Royal authority very materially aided the development of Government by Cabinet and Parliament.

III Walpole the First Prime Minister

There has not been much dispute about the fact that Sir Robert Walpole was the first Prime Minister. It is true that the Tory, Robert Harley, was repeatedly described by Swift as First Minister, and that Swift even used the term Prime Minister; still Harley possessed none of the authority that we generally concede to the office, and the Queen was not prepared

to admit that any one ruled but herself. After her death, while the King was on the continent, Townshend was appointed Secretary of State with the power of choosing his own colleagues, but as his abilities were rather mediocre he was not capable of filling the office of Prime Minister. Upon the dismissal of Townshend and the resignation of Walpole, Stanhope and Sunderland were left to divide the power between them, but as neither party would allow any special superiority to the other, neither man could really be considered a First Minister.

Something should be said concerning Walpole's career in the Cabinet before 1721. When in 1717 he could not agree with his colleagues as to the advisability of granting the King a supply against Sweden, he resigned from the Cabinet. The King was so opposed to his resignation that he handed him back his Seals no less than ten times.[1] George was loath to let him go because of his influence in the House of Commons, which body was ever becoming a more potent factor in the Government, but eventually yielded and accepted his resignation. This act of Walpole's is significant, because behind it lay the principle which he was later to enforce as Prime Minister; namely, that ministerial responsibility implied ministerial unity in the Cabinet on vital public questions of the day. Walpole's avowed reason for resigning was that it was impossible for him to continue to endorse measures of which he disapproved, which were introduced by Cabinet rivals. So, in spite of the dissension from time to time, there was a growing feeling that there

1 Blauveult, Development of Cabinet Government in England, p.235. Referred to hereafter as Blauveult.

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1 Blauvelt, Development of Cabinet Government in England, p.238. Referred to hereafter as Blauvelt.

ought to be unanimity in the Cabinet. That this feeling had not matured into an established custom, however, was shown by Walpole himself a little later. In 1719 the Stanhope-Sunderland Administration brought in a bill which was to limit the creation of peers by the Crown. Though it was defeated in the House of Commons chiefly by Walpole's efforts, this did not prevent him from joining the Government soon afterward, even though he had not changed his views in the slightest. Furthermore, although he opposed the South Sea Scheme, he remained a member of the Cabinet which supported it.

Sir Robert Walpole is generally considered the first person who discharged the functions of Prime Minister in the modern sense.[1] He was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer by George I in 1721. Though Walpole held both of these offices this was not universally true of the Prime Minister of the eighteenth century. The Duke of Devonshire in 1756, chiefly by his rank in the peerage, and secondarily as First Lord in the Treasury, enjoyed a certain official primacy, but outside Court circles the recognized head of the Government was Pitt. From 1757 to 1761 everyone knows that Pitt wielded the power and was the real Prime Minister, even though the Duke of Newcastle was at the head of the Treasury, and Pitt himself was only a Secretary of State. In 1761, after Pitt resigned, a curious situation existed. Newcastle still was First Lord of the Treasury, Grenville was the leader of the House of

1 Ogg, English Government and Politics, p. 132. Hereafter referred to as Ogg.

Commons,[1] while Bute was really Prime Minister. We cannot conceive of a situation more at variance with present customs. Lord Grenville became head of the Government in 1763 holding both the office of First Lord of the Treasury and that of Chancellor of the Exchequer.[1a] The two offices had not been united since the death of Henry Pelham. Neither of these offices, of course, involved any responsibility at that time. They simply provided the Prime Minister with a salary and with an office which is recognized in the English Constitution. William Pitt, who had now become the Earl of Chatham, was again declared Prime Minister in 1766, but took the unimportant office of Privy Seal. So we see that it took a considerable length of time before the custom became firmly established that the Prime Minister should be the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

IV Relations of the King to Prime Minister

Walpole had a profound effect upon the office of Prime Minister. But before we go into his actual administration, it should be firmly impressed upon the reader's mind that his shaping of the office was in no way premeditated. It was a completely natural process and the evolution was entirely shaped by the circumstances of the period.

The King's relation to the Prime Minister, and his effect upon the office throughout the eighteenth century, is of the utmost importance. This is perhaps more true between 1721

1 The modern Prime Minister is head of the House of Commons in that he is supposed to be able to command a majority there at any time or he is dutybound to resign his post.

1a That is, held under a single man.

and 1742 than in any other period. Today the immediate source of a Minister's strength is the House of Commons, but in the first half of the eighteenth century it was the favor of the court. Thus it was that although Walpole did more than anyone else to transfer the power of Government from the King to the people, yet it was the King who put him at the head of affairs. George I, to be sure, was at the mercy of the Whig clans - the Pelhams, the Cavendishes, and the Cobhams - but among their representatives he was often able to exercise a limited choice for first place. He could choose whether the head of the Administration should be Sunderland, Townshend, or Walpole. In 1721 he chose the last named.

The first two Georges, as we pointed out earlier in the essay, were decidedly weak sovereigns. Walpole was the first English statesman to take complete advantage of their weakness. George I he succeeded in rendering entirely subservient to him. Walpole differed from his predecessors, not in courting royal favor less, but in courting it differently; that is, he made the King employ him by showing that he, and he alone, was able to manage the House of Commons. George I could not do without money and admitted himself that Walpole was the only man who could produce a supply of it at will. So we see that although Walpole devoted most of his energy to securing a Parliamentary majority, he did so that he might thereby control the King. George was indeed made to give up many of his pet schemes, but he was also made to see that his choice was between half a loaf and none at all.

With Walpole at the head of the Government it was workable; some of the things which the King wanted could be done. Without him was anarchy in the House of Commons and rebellion in the nation.

George I did not permit the Whigs to choose his first Cabinet, and he allowed the three great leaders only very subordinate positions. As Secretary of State and First Minister he chose Lord Townshend, who, as we have said, was a man of only fair abilities. George also changed the Cabinet as he saw fit in 1716 and 1717. Stanhope, however, early raised the question in letters to Walpole, as to whether the King should exercise unfettered choice in the distribution of offices. Is he to command the services of individual leaders at his own discretion, and to assign them their respective offices as to him may seem good? Queen Anne undoubtedly acted on this principle. But by 1721 Walple thought the time had come for the Ministers to settle the offices among themselves. There were two circumstances essential to the growth of the British type of Goverment; one was the exclusion of the King from the Cabinet, which we have already remarked upon. The other was the presence of the Ministers in the Legislature. We have seen that the King was dependent upon Walpole, and that Walpole's power rested upon the House of Commons. His Cabinet, therefore, could only be powerful if its members represented the House of Commons. So it is especially to Walpole that we owe it that government in England is carried on by Parliamentary Ministers.

Upon the death of George I in 1727 his only son, George II, came to the throne. The new King was under the mistaken impression that he could appoint his own Ministers as his father had done, and as he had been at enmity with Walpole for some years, he undertook to make his friend, Sir Spencer Compton, his Chief Minister. This choice was impossible, however, as there was still only one man in the nation who could control the House of Commons, and therefore there was only one man fit to be First Minister. The King, as a result, was immediately obliged to reinstate Walpole, as well as his subordinates. "Among these was the man whom he had characterized as 'an impertinent fool' (Newcastle), the man who was a 'choleric blockhead' (Townshend), and the man who was a 'scoundrel, fool, and dirty buffoon' (Horace Walpole)."[1] Thus we see that the authority of the Crown was on the wane.

Notwithstanding his power in Parliament, Walpole was too wise to place his support upon it alone apart from Royal favor. A Prime Minister's ability to retain a Parliamentary majority at that time depended largely on the popular impression that he had the support of the Crown. Even with the existing bribery, other things being anywhere near equal, the disposition of the country was to retain a House of Commons pleasing to the King, and likewise the disposition of Parliament was to maintain a Minister pleasing to the King. So Walpole exerted himself to the utmost to gain the Royal favour. As was the case in the

1 Blauveult, p. 156.

previous reign, the Civil list would have to be voted and it was imperative that the King's business should be in the hands of a Minister capable of managing the House of Commons.[1] An example of this occurred when Walpole sought to be reappointed over Compton in 1727. When Compton suggested a jointure of £ 50,000 a year for the Queen, Walpole undertook to double it, and the King's hesitation in the choice of a leader was brought to an end. So Walpole enjoyed the favour of the Court because he was able by prudent and skillful management of the House of Commons to obtain its supplies.

Walpole had another source of power with the Court; George II, though he did not know it, was rather easily managed by his Queen, Caroline, and by the time he acceded to the throne in 1727, she had acquired a complete ascendance over him. Although there had been family trouble between the Prince of Wales and his father, George I, before 1727, Walpole, with a thought for the future, had not neglected to cultivate Caroline's friendship. By the time her husband came to the throne, Walpole had impressed the vigorous understanding of Queen Caroline with a sense of his value to the Hanoverian dynasty. She clearly saw that through his control of the Commons was the easiest way opened of getting things done. She also saw that peace and low taxes, both of which were strongly advocated by Walpole, were best for her husband, and she governed him accordingly.

1 Leadham, Political History of England, Vol.IX, p.334. Referred to hereafter as Leadham.

1 Beadham, Political History of England, Vol.IX, p.384.
Referred to hereafter as Beadham.

Morley goes so far as to say that "every design, project, and combination which he (George II) found in his mind, had been laboriously planted there by concert between Walpole and the Queen."[1] So we may conclude that Caroline was no mean asset to Walpole. With this friendship in mind, and its value to Walpole, it is not difficult to see that Caroline's death in 1737 weakened his power immeasurably. Walpole was now left standing absolutely alone, confronted by the fury of the opposition, the selfishness of his colleagues, and the sudden humors of the King.[2]

John Carteret, England's leading representative in foreign affairs, assumed an important place in the Cabinet upon the resignation of Walpole in 1742, and is now generally acknowledged to have been the Prime Minister from 1742 to 1744. This was a natural state of affairs, because most of the interest of the country at that time centred upon foreign relations. Carteret thought himself the ablest man in the Cabinet, and tried to carry all with a high hand; that is, without the Parliamentary leadership which Walpole, as we shall presently see, had recognized as the only justification for Cabinet leadership, he attempted to fill an even more arbitrary position than Walpole had filled. Trusting to his favor with the King, which was one asset he possessed in abundance, he ignored all else; "Give any man the Crown on his side", he was accustomed to say, "and he can defy everything." Walpole's fall might have taught him

1 Morley, Walpole, p. 92.
2 Morley, Walpole, p. 199.
Referred to hereafter as Morley.

Morley goes so far as to say that "every design, project, and combination which he (George II) found in his mind, had been laboriously planted there by concert between Walpole and the Queen."[1] So we may conclude that Caroline was no mean agent to Walpole. With this friendship in mind, and its value to Walpole, it is not difficult to see that Caroline's death in 1737 weakened his power immeasurably[2]. Walpole was now left standing absolutely alone, confronted by the fury of the opposition, the unfriendliness of his colleagues, and the sudden absence of the King.

John Carteret, England's leading representative in foreign affairs, assumes an important place in the Cabinet upon the resignation of Walpole in 1742, and is now generally acknowledged to have been the Prime Minister from 1742 to 1744. This was a natural state of affairs, because most of the interest of the country at that time centred upon foreign relations. Carteret thought himself the ablest man in the Cabinet, and tried to carry all with a high hand; that is, without the Parliamentary leadership which Walpole, as we shall presently see, had recognized as the only justification for Cabinet leadership. He attempted to fill an even more arbitrary position than Walpole had filled. Trusting to his favor with the King, which was one asset he possessed in abundance, he ignored all else; "Give any man the Crown on his side". He was accustomed to say, "and he can defy everything." Walpole's fall might have taught him

1 Morley. Walpole. p. 92.
2 Morley. Walpole. p. 109.
Referred to hereafter as Morley.

how shallow was his maxim. Eventually the King, against his will, was obliged to allow Carteret to be dismissed (1744). This too in spite of the fact that Carteret was now George II's favorite Minister. The King sullenly accepted the changes in the Cabinet, "enforced by a veiled constitutional lecture from Hardwicke on behalf of the Cabinet. 'Ministers, sir', wound up the Chancellor, 'are only your instruments of government.' 'Ministers', was the royal retort, 'are the King in this country.'"[1] Carteret's dismissal is simply another indication of the weakening of the King's power.

Upon the death of Henry Pelham, who was Prime Minister from 1744 to 1754, a curious problem arose and it was settled in an equally curious way. The question was, who should succeed to the office? Lord Orford (Sir Robert Walpole) and Bolingbroke had died. Bath had lost all power, and Lord Granville (Carteret) all ambition; Lord Chesterfield was content with a subordinate position. Pitt was at Bath, was ill, and had no party back of him. This dearth of capable statesmen made a real and not an imaginary problem. Also, who would pick the Prime Minister? The Houses were not to be consulted, and so were adjourned. Nobody even pretended to suppose that the Sovereign would choose the delegate himself. Pelham had risen to power by way of the House of Commons. Charles Fox was probably the ablest man in the House of Commons, but was hated by the King, and Royal favour was still a potent factor as the Lower House felt decidedly safer with a leader who was on good

1 Robertson, England Under the Hanoverians, p.96. Referred to hereafter as Robertson.

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terms with the Monarch than with one who was not. A way was found out of the dilemma by George himself, who left the selection of his successor to the Cabinet members. The outcome was that the Duke of Newcastle, brother of the late Pelham, who was probably the most influential statesman of the time, even if far from the best, engineered his own nomination and succeeded to the First Lord of the Treasury. This seems a particularly unusual event to the writer, because it is the one occasion which comes to mind in which the King of the eighteenth century had less power than the King of the twentieth. If such a situation existed today and there were so little to choose between the possible candidates, George V would undoubtedly have considerable choice in the selection of his leading Minister.

Let us now consider for a few moments the King's relation to William Pitt, who was the last of GeorgeII's Ministers and who was Prime Minister from 1756 to 1762. When Pitt came into power with the Duke of Devonshire for the former's first Administration, he had pretty much his own way with the King. He did not have many friends to whom he cared to give places in the Government, but he did fill the important offices with those whom he wished. Although Devonshire was the nominal head of the Cabinet, Pitt was the real Premier.

Let us not suppose, however, that the King was entirely subservient. While he could no longer impose a Cabinet upon Parliament which they disliked, no more could those who led a majority in Parliament as yet be sure of imposing upon the

King Ministers for whom he did not care. For a long time the opposition of George II to even Pitt himself was decisive. "Frequently, in the end, the Sovereign accepted Ministers in his Cabinet whom he cared not to have, but often this came only as the result of compromise, long persuasion, cajolery by his Ministers, or through the influence of someone whom he liked."[1]

The year 1757 brought another political defeat to George II. He at length found Pitt's Ministry intolerable and resolved to free himself from bondage. He failed to persuade Newcastle to form an Administration and even offered office to his most bitter enemy, Fox, but in vain. At length he appealed to one of his faithful followers, Lord Waldegrave, a man of no political experience. Newcastle persuaded Waldegrave, and not without cause, that he (Newcastle) would be able to effect numerous resignations which would ruin him, should Waldegrave attempt to form a Cabinet. Hence, Waldegrave was dissuaded from what would have been certain disaster, and the King was forced to submit to a Newcastle - Pitt combination. Although George II was compelled to accept Pitt, the former was not a nonentity, even now, in the selection of Ministers. As Turner says, "He could not choose freely himself, but often made effective obstruction."

The old King was now content; indeed it would have mattered little whether he were content or not, as he could not

1 Turner, The Cabinet Council of England in the 17th and 18th Centuries, Vol.II, p.40.
Referred to hereafter as Turner.

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have emancipated himself from so powerful a Ministry. The vigor and success with which the war had been waged in Germany by the Pitt Cabinet, and the smoothness with which all public business had been carried on had won over George II. He died in 1760. Let us summarize in a few words the effect of his actions on Cabinet government. Though he was fond of war, he believed in governing as he knew a constitutional monarch should, and so sacrificed his own strongest predilections and antipathies.[1] Thus he gave Walpole his own way; received Newcastle as his Minister; discarded Carteret, who of all politicians was the most pleasing to him, and finally, consented to Pitt, whom he hated.

With the accession of George III, grandson of George II, we come upon what Robertson considers the "critical epoch of the history of the Cabinet".[2] He goes on to say that the Cabinet had advanced because the Crown had accepted Whig domination and the syndication of its prerogative amongst a group of Ministers who, with the aid of Parliament, could make any other Ministry impossible. Now, relying on the revived strength of the monarchical principle, and the desire to unite by breaking all parties, George III insisted upon his legal rights to govern as well as reign, and used his great powers of corruption and influence against, and not in favor of his Ministers. If his policy proved successful, there would

1 Lecky, A History of England in the 18th Century, Vol.II,p.566. Referred to hereafter as Lecky.

2 Robertson, England under the Hanoverians, p.190.

be a revival of the theory and practice of departmental government under the personal direction and authority of the Sovereign. The first twenty years of the reign of George III witnessed such a deliberate policy on the part of the Crown.

The difference between the Cabinet system of Government and the Departmental system is vital. In the latter, the Crown is the connecting link and the motor force in policy; it is based on the right of each Minister to advise, coupled with his responsibility solely for the executive action of each department. In the former, Ministers are coördinated through the Prime Minister, and the necessary consequence is collective responsibility.[1] George III accepted the Departmental system as the guiding star of his political theory. To be willing and able to carry on the government in accordance with his will was to be the sole justification for a share in the Administration. Ministers might or might not be agreed on matters of first importance; all the agreement between them which was necessary was that each in his own sphere[2] should act as an agent of the King's policy. The King was to be the only element of coherence in a Ministry, and it was to be formed by the Prime Minister in accordance with his instructions.

The sympathy of the people was in the main with the King's policy. "A monarch is the historical symbol of the emotional ideals of a nation. George III appealed to the

1 For government measures.
2 Each Minister in the Cabinet was, and is, the executive head of some department such as, foreign affairs, colonial affairs, etc.

loyalty of the people, as the representative of the national unity and dignity. As for the Prime Minister, he was not very intelligible to them. They at least had not chosen him, nor was it quite clear to them how he had been chosen."[1]

George III's conception of government is not entirely unjustifiable because his office was in no way curtailed by law, even though the actual powers of the monarch had been declining. So he might well believe he could regain the Royal power. According to Blackstone in his Commentaries, "The King of England is not only the chief, but properly the sole magistrate of the nation, all others acting by commission from him, and in due subordination to him..... He governs the Kingdom. Statesmen, who administer affairs, are only his Ministers."[2] George doubtless felt, and sincerely too, that if the Crown were restored to its proper place, and if the exercise of the prerogative harmonized with the unquestioned theory of the Constitution, the elaborate apparatus of corruption by which a confederacy of Ministers dictated to the nation in the name of the King would be dissolved. It would extirpate corruption at its source, and restore the Legislature to its long lost independence.[3] Unhappily, the new policy as interpreted by George III failed to distinguish between the inevitable and beneficial results of the growth of Parliamentary government, and the accidental defects of the Whig régime.

1 Blauveult, pp. 243,244.
2 Blackstone, Book I, Ch. VII.
3 Robertson, p. 221.

Lord Bute was one of George III's early tools in his attempt to re-establish the power and prestige of the Crown; he was popularly known as the "King's Favourite". When Bute first joined the Cabinet in 1761 Pitt felt that a reasonably successful alliance might be formed between them because they did have at least one principle in common; that is, they both disliked government by party connection. The trouble was, however, that while the King, through Bute, desired to destroy factions to establish a personal government, Pitt's aim was that they should give place to a government by the best men, supported by the King and the nation.

Pitt had received information that Spain was intending to join in the war upon the side of France which was now raging between France and England, and at once proposed to declare war with Spain. The King's idea was precisely the opposite as he wished to withdraw altogether from the war on the continent. As only one of his colleagues, Temple, agreed with him on this issue, Pitt was forced to resign. Shortly afterward, Newcastle was ousted by George and Bute, the latter succeeding to the office of First Lord of the Treasury. George Grenville now became Secretary of State in Bute's place. These two resignations are of significance, because they mark the beginning of the King's climb to power which reached its climax in 1770 with the long administration of Lord North.

Bute was now Prime Minister and remained so until 1763. Robertson sums up the political situation very well: Bute was

a Royal favorite, handsome, pompous, and conceited, and with intentions that were ambitious to say the least. He was cursed from the outset, however, by third rate abilities, vanity, a total lack of real administrative experience, and the pathetic persistence with which he mistook aptitude in intrigue for political insight and statesmanship. "With a young and opinionated Sovereign, a great war on hand and a critical international situation requiring consummate skill and tact, the advent to power of this untrained amateur was a serious public misfortune."[1] With this description of the new Prime Minister's character and ability in mind, we can readily see that he would present no insurmountable obstacle to the realization of the ambitions of a headstrong young monarch like George III.

The King was now free to appoint whom he liked to the Cabinet and did so. The promotion of Grenville, who had ever been treated with contempt by Pitt, was a manifestation of the new Royal prerogative. Indeed, the watchwords of the new government were prerogative and "purity". The Sovereign was not now a puppet in the hands of any subject, or combination of subjects. He was not forced to part with any one whom he delighted to honor, as his grandfather had been forced to part with Carteret.[2]

1 Robertson, p. 219.

2 Macaulay, Earl of Chatham, p. 45. Referred to hereafter as Macaulay.

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1 Robertson, p. 219.

2 Macaulay, Hist of Chatham, p. 46.
Referred to hereafter as Macaulay.

The King did not obtain his own way without some trouble. Bute wished to make peace with Spain, but he was helpless because of the lack of a majority in the House of Commons. Therefore, it was necessary to revert to the vices which were common to the school of Walpole. Lecky says that the worst days of Walpole's Administration now seemed pure. Henry Fox was called in to manage the systematic corruption of the House of Commons and the pay Office was turned into a mart for votes. "Bribes ranging from £200 and upwards were given almost publicly at the pay Office. Martin, the Secretary of the Treasury, afterwards acknowledged that no less than £25,000 were expended in a single morning in purchasing votes."[1]

The King said, "We must call in bad men to govern bad men." In spite of Pitt, whose eloquence absorbed the Lower House for three and one-half hours as he spoke against peace, the Treaty of Paris was concluded without further difficulty.[2] Needless to say, the exultation of the Court was boundless. But the whole miserable business was a sinister prelude to the policy of substituting "purity and patriotism" for the selfish corruption of the Whig oligarchy. Bute had now done all he could for George III as Prime Minister. He had cleared the ground for the establishment of the King's system of government. But though the stage was set for George and his revival of the Royal authority, the curtain was not to rise until he had overcome a considerable amount of opposition.

1 Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, III, p.61. Vol.

2 The Treaty of Paris ended the Seven Years' War between England and France and Spain. It was unusual in that England was winning, yet entreated her enemies to stop. The Treaty was unpopular in England.

These tactics could not be kept up indefinitely and Bute was eventually forced to resign his office. Though dismissed, he was still the principal adviser of the King and nominated George Grenville as his successor. George was opposed to Grenville and sought Pitt; but as the latter had now somewhat altered his views on the importance of party, he would not come in without the support of the Whig families. The King, now considering Grenville the sole barrier against the Whigs, changed his policy and determined to support him.

Grenville, the brother of Lord Temple, had seceded from the Whig party and now his learning on almost every question was toward the assertion of Royal authority. It is certain that he came into office with the definite object of carrying into action the Tory principle of government and avowedly to secure the King from falling into the hands of the Whig organization.[1] He possessed a great amount of influence in the House of Commons, which never hurt any Prime Minister. Those who put him in power intended that he should play the role of Bute's puppet. However, he had qualities which had not yet shown themselves; "devouring ambition, dauntless courage, self-confidence amounting to presumption, and a temper which could not endure opposition."[2] We shall soon see that he was disposed to be nobody's tool.

We have stated a few lines before that Lecky considered Grenville thoroughly loyal to the Crown. There is

1. Lecky, Vol. III, p. 92.
2. Macaulay, p. 60.

considerable uncertainty on this point however, as several different authors[1] seem to disagree with Lecky. Macaulay goes to the other extreme, stating that Grenville considered Parliament the only legitimate organ through which the voice of the people could be expressed. All power was from the people, and to Parliament the whole power of the people had been delegated. Grenville wished to see Parliament despotic over the nation and also over the court.[2] The writer is inclined to believe that Lecky is a little at fault here because of events which followed. Macaulay has probably exaggerated, but the writer believes that he was nearer the truth than Lecky. Blauveult claims that he had been brought up a Whig and retained so much of Whig principles as to have a high sense of the authority of the House of Commons, and that he preferred to derive power from that body rather than from the King.[3]

In spite of the fact that Bute and George expected Grenville would be entirely subservient, he did not prove to be very passive under the marks of Royal displeasure. "On the 12th of June(1765), the Duke of Bedford, Lords Sandwich and Halifax, and Mr. Grenville, brought the King a remonstrance, which took an hour in reading. When they were gone, the King said, that 'If he had not broken out into the most profuse sweat, he should have been suffocated with indignation.'"[4]

1 Blauveult, Hunt, & Keppel.
2 Macaulay, p. 61.
3 Blauveult, p. 254.
4 Keppel, Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries, Vol. I, p. 212. Keppel quotes from Walpole's George the Third. Keppel referred to hereafter as Keppel.

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1 Blanvelt, Hunt, & Keppel.
2 Macaulay, p. 61.
3 Blanvelt, p. 85.
4 Keppel, Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries, Vol. I. p. 213. Keppel quotes from Lefcole's George the Third. Keppel referred to hereafter as Keppel.

Grenville's position was strengthened in 1765 by the refusal of Pitt, at the request of the King to form a Whig Administration. Pitt would not come without Temple who was one of the King's many enemies. The King's power was further reduced because the Minister now exacted a promise from him that he would nevermore consult Lord Bute. The King was almost as much of a prisoner as Charles I had been when in the Isle of Wight.[1] Such were the fruits of a policy which, only a few months before, was represented as having forever secured the throne against the dictation of insolent subjects.

His Majesty's aversion to his Ministers increased day by day. Grenville would not give him money to buy gardens which he really needed, his private orations to the King were intolerable, and the ministers thwarted his plan for a Regent. His resentment was at its height. Now Pitt refused to serve, even with Temple, and George found no way of escape save by turning to the great Whig families. Grenville was dismissed, and an Administration formed under the Marquis of Rockingham took office on July 16, 1765. This must have been a bitter humiliation to George. Yet, though he was for the moment defeated, he did not mean to give over the rule of his Kingdom to the Whigs, and for the present anything was better than Grenville's tyranny.

Let us consider for a moment George III's development from 1760 to 1765. The King in 1765 was no longer the inexperienced boy who had five years before been managed by his

1 Macaulay, p. 75.

mother and his Groom of the Stole.[1] He had observed the struggles of parties, and conferred daily on high questions of State with able and experienced politicians. His way of life had developed his understanding and character, and he now had very decided opinions on men and things. Nothing could be more natural than that he should have high notions of his own prerogative, should be impatient of opposition, and should wish all public men to be detached from each other and dependent upon himself alone, nor could anything be more natural than that, in the state in shich the political world then was, he should find instruments fit for his purpose.[2]

The organization known unofficially as the "King's Friends" was the principal means by which George finally achieved his greatest power. They were a body of members in the Lower House created by the influence of the Crown, and induced by its corruption to vote always and only for the King's measures, even against the King's Ministers. They disdained all political ties except those which bound them to the throne. They were willing to coalesce with any party, or undermine any party at a moment's notice.[3] They were the King's friends, but this friendship implied no personal intimacy whatever; it was purely a political relationship on a strictly business basis. These men often occupied minor positions in the Ministry, though not very often in the Cabinet. According to Macaulay, they were never high in the Administration, but were always to be found in places of much emolument, little labor, and no

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2 Macaulay, p. 84.
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1 Hate. [illegible]
2 Macaulay. p. 84.
3 Macaulay. p. 84.

responsibility. Their peculiar business was not to support the Ministry against the opposition, but to support the King against the Ministry. Whenever the King was forced to give his reluctant consent to a bill which his legitimate Ministers pushed, they (King's Friends) thwarted it in Parliament. All complaints against them were of no avail because of the King's protection; they seemed to have a life estate in their offices. The Rockingham Administration could not repeal the stamp Act, and found numerous other measures which it desired to pass balked by this insidious group of professional politicians.

The Marquis of Rockingham had done everything in his power to draw Pitt over to his side and to form a coalition Cabinet with him. Also the King had urged that he follow the same course. It was all to no avail, however, as Pitt, in accordance with his policy, persistently isolated himself from all other politicians. If, at this time, he had allied himself closely with Lord Rockingham, the court would have been helpless. And there was nothing to balk such a union, as Pitt and Rockingham agreed on all important principles, such as condemning the peace, the Stamp Act, etc. while their points of difference were on non-essentials. There was nothing to divide Pitt from the Whigs, nor was there anything in common between him and the "King's Friends" that he should lend himself to their purposes. "His mysterious aloofness, dictatorial temper, and shortsighted identification of party connection for public ends with oligarchical faction wrecked the Rockingham Ministry. it left Pitt himself without a party, (and) at the mercy of the

King, (and) of the King's Friends ....."[1]

It is clear that Rockingham came into office simply as a favour to the King, who felt he must be delivered from Lord Grenville. The Cabinet was as a whole objectionable to the Sovereign. The Prime Minister passed all his measures in the face of an able opposition of which the King himself was the head. Because of this constant friction in the Government, and because Rockingham was too wealthy, too indifferent to office, too much actuated by public principles, and too closely bound by party to yield to George, it was not unnatural that his Ministry was short lived. He retired from office in 1766.

Pitt now threw over his most trusted adviser, Temple, and agreed to form a new Administration at the request of the King. He was not won over by ignoble bribery, but by the praise, caresses, and promises lavished upon him by the King. George appealed to his vanity by telling him that he alone could put an end to faction and defy all the powerful factions in the land united. Pitt had always regarded the person of the Sovereign with profound veneration, and as soon as he was brought face to face with Royalty, his imagination and sensibility were too strong for his principles. In fairness to Pitt, however, we must say that he did accept office with high ambitions to justify the confidence of the nation in a stable Ministry.

The Earl of Chatham's Cabinet was composed of men of

1 Robertson, p. 239.
2 William Pitt had now become the Earl of Chatham.

all shades of political opinion; King's Friends, staunch Whigs, and friends and enemies of each other. The Administration was weak, but it could not easily be overthrown, because the divisions in the Ministry involved divisions in the opposition. Chatham, however, was not so well pleased. He discovered when it was too late that although he had accomplised his scheme of Administration, there was so much dissension involved that he was no longer Prime Minister. With this "mosaic"[1] Cabinet, George not unreasonably hoped to be able to carry out his ideal system of Government. Chatham's illness, which necessitated his absence from almost all of the cabinet meetings, further strengthened the King's position and he now was able to exert great influence in the Government.

The Duke of Grafton was virtually Prime Minister from 1767 to 1770, although Chatham did not officially resign his post until 1768. In Chatham's absence he had become the principal Minister, though he had no real authority in the Cabinet, and remained there after Rockingham had refused to establish a new Ministry at the request of the King. Grafton, however, was Prime Minister in name only. He was outvoted in the House of Commons on some of the most important questions, and desired only to resign. As early as July, 1767, he told the King that he was resolved to retire, and that he had accepted the foremost place in the Cabinet, at the head of the Treasury, only with the intention of serving under Chatham, and not with any idea of being Prime Minister himself. He was persuaded to remain, though conscious

1. Hunt, [illegible] p. 85.

of his unfitness for the post. Now, disgusted and indolent, he remained for long periods in the country, only going to London once a week to discharge his duties as First Minister of the Crown. Needless to say, the King gradually gained full control of the Ministry and on every important issue the Ministers followed a line of action which met with his approval. In 1770 Camden, the Chancellor, who had weakly bowed to the majority in the Cabinet previously, was encouraged by Chatham's fierce attack on the Ministry to openly revolt against his colleagues, and was dismissed. Shortly afterward he died. Grafton's policy — if we may use as strong a term as that — had been to carry out the ideas of Chatham. Now, filled with misgivings at his completely isolated position and a policy opposed to his convictions, he was driven to resign. He recanted nothing, modified nothing, and defended his policy boldly and ably in the House of Lords. He had thrown up his post simply because he was disgusted with his position, and with the storm of obloquy around him. Lord North, already Chancellor of the Exchequer, succeeded him.

We now see the powerful position in which George III by various means, had placed himself. Before we carry on with his reign any further we have other developments to consider which took place between 1720 and 1770. Our next topic is the Prime Minister's relation to the House of Commons.

V. Prime Minister's Relation to the House of Commons 1720-1770

Walpole's relations with the House of Commons as Prime Minister are of the utmost importance to us. He it was who gave us the first inkling of Ministerial responsibility to the Lower House; that when a Prime Minister loses his majority in the Representative Chamber, he should resign. This section deals with his conception of the Lower House and its importance in his scheme of Government. There were three possible types of Government at Walpole's command when he became Prime Minister in 1721. Was it to be an absolute rule of the King, or, as Cromwell sought, a Parliament making laws and voting money, coördinate with the authority of the Chief Person, and not meddling with the executive; or a Parliament containing, nominating, guiding and controlling its own executive? Walpole found it easiest, safest, and most natural to work steadily toward the last of these systems.[1] Having made this choice, it was inevitable that Walpole should conceive of the Cabinet as being very closely related to the House of Commons.

With this in mind, let us examine Walpole's idea of the House of Commons a little more fully. The Lower House, in his day, despite its narrow suffrage, besides its decisive prerogative of taxation, contained a considerable representation of the new classes and new interests which were gradually gaining in influence. Walpole realized the growing importance of financial questions, and that the House of Commons was the

1 Morley, p. 139.

place for the solution of these. Also he recognized that his own ability lay largely in the direction of finances and that as the Minister of the times he must work in the House for the times. Undoubtedly Walpole was anxious for power, but not so much for personal gain as for the opportunity to perform the service which he believed he could best perform.

In dealing with the House of Commons, a Minister was dealing with the living and social forces of the country in all their ~~vanity.~~ variety. The first question was how to organize them for practical purposes, and Walpole answered it by the principle of Party. He founded his Government directly on the support of a Whig majority in the Lower House. Another question in government was how to keep the Administration in gear with the party majority, and Walpole's solution was a Party Cabinet. The Cabinet system, then, was the key to Parliamentary monarchy. This idea of a party Cabinet was unusual because all the Cabinets had heretofore been coalition affairs.

As we have intimated, Walpole was influential in the House of Commons largely because of his exceptional financial ability. Control of finances, is, as we know, a great source of power in government, and Walpole was an unrivalled man in business. Wherever money was concerned, his knowledge, skill, clearness and judgment gave him an authority that was paramount. In all these transactions even his enemies had to admit that the House of Commons relied more on Walpole's opinion than on that of any other member. But Walpole had another source of power

in the House of Commons that was not so commendable. He governed by means of an assembly which was saturated with corruption; furthermore, he resisted every attempt to improve it. He employed the vast patronage of the Crown uniformly and steadily with the single view of maintaining his political position. Much of the expenditure of the secret service money went to the direct purchase of the support of Members of Parliament. He saw to it also that the Whig nobles spent their money freely so as to secure the small and corrupt constituencies. This gave the Whigs considerable control over the borough representation, while of the representatives of the counties nine-tenths were relatives or dependents of the great Whig families. His moral guilt in this matter, however, was neither greater nor less than that of his successors and predecessors, only he took more pains about it than they. Quoting from Burke, "He was far from governing by corruption. He governed by party attachments."[1]

Walpole recognized the importance of the House of Commons, and furthermore, he believed that the Prime Minister should be the leader of that body. This is shown by his refusal of a peerage while he was in office. The King wished to reward him for his distinguished services by a peerage. But Walpole was the first Minister who made the House of Commons the centre of authority, and he declined to leave it. Though he loved rank and dignity, he loved power more, and sagacity told him that he could sway more effectively the counsels of

1 Blauveult, p. 201. Blauveult quotes from Burke, "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs."

his time, and exercise more control of even the Upper House, by retaining the lead of the Lower. He was, as one may easily imagine from what we have said previously, the leader of the Whig party in the Commons. So Walpole is the first man who gave rise to the custom that the Prime Minister should be able to command a majority of this House on Government measures.

But though Walpole knew that most of his power was derived from this source, yet he was by no means deaf to public opinion; this is shown by his abandonment of the Excise Tax in 1733. This bill, as brought out by Walpole, reduced to its simplest terms, was a proposal to turn the customs duty on the importation of tobacco into an excise duty on its consumption. The bill would undoubtedly have greatly decreased smuggling, augmented the revenue, simplified the taxes, and facilitated the collection of them at the least possible expense. So much for the proposition itself. The bare rumour of it was followed by the "fiercest popular outcry that Walpole or any other Minister in our history ever encountered."[1] Walpole doubtless could have carried the bill in Parliament as it had passed by large majorities through the earlier stages, but he soon perceived that the temper of the country was such that if his bill became law, it could not be enforced without bloodshed. Consequently, he refused to let it come to a final vote for fear, not that it might not be carried, but for fear that it might be carried. "I will not," he said, "be the Minister to enforce taxes at the cost of blood."

1 Morley, p. 171.

Some contend that Walpole should have resigned when this measure was not pushed through. He could have carried the measure, but he knew when it was wise to look beyond the walls of Parliament. Even today no Minister is bound to resign so long as he commands a Parliamentary majority. He knew that the country could be perfectly well governed without an excise on tobacco, and that to insist on an excise in the face of popular opinion would be an exceedingly poor piece of government. To be sure, a modern Prime Minister would have resigned rather than give up the most important measure of his Administration. But Walpole's position was not that of a modern Prime Minister. No Prime Minister today, out of deference to the people, would give up an important measure which he was able to get through the House of Commons. But no modern House would be willing to pass a measure, to prevent the execution of which the people would be willing to shed their blood. Walpole knew, of course, that the majority in his Parliament did not, to any extent, represent the Constituencies.

"English political history contains many more dazzling episodes than this. It contains very few which a constitutional statesman will regard as more worthy of his admiration."[1]

We now come to the event in Walpole's career which is regarded as his worst political mistake; that is, his failure to resign the Prime Ministership in 1739 when his advocacy of peace was disregarded. The object of the proposed war with Spain was to prevent the search of the colony ships carrying on

1 Lecky, Vol. I, p374.

a contraband trade with the Spanish main. There was much smuggling going on under the shelter of the Treaty of Utrecht,[1] and Spain was at least partly warranted in her high handedness. Nevertheless, this process of search as carried on by the Spanish was regarded by the English as a pure insult. When Walpole proposed a preliminary convention with Spain, for the purpose of making an amicable settlement, the opposition denounced the proposition and re-echoed the passionate cry of the nation for war.

Walpole's reasons for not desiring a war at this time were logical, and events proved that his advice might well have been followed. Under a long peace the country was steadily advancing in prosperity and wealth, and the new dynasty and parliamentary system were beginning to take root. He knew that behind the critical relations between Spain and Great Britain lay equally critical relations in Europe. Because of the Family Compact of 1733, war with Spain would eventually mean war with France. War with France would be the destruction of Great Britain's peace policy. Nevertheless, the opposition at length succeeded in its design and war became inevitable. Walpole, instead of retiring, as he should have done, declared war himself. He had at length surrendered to the powerful mercantile class, national sentiment, the court, Cabinet and Opposition, all of whom had been opposed to him.

1 - The Treaty of Utrecht ended war between France and England in 1713.

We may be able to understand why he yielded, but it is not quite so clear why he failed to resign. The Prime Minister now placed himself in a completely false position by retaining office though he was an unwilling accomplice in a war of which he disapproved; he was counteracted by the Cabinet and reviled by the nation. Why did he not resign? There are reasons, to be sure, but none of them seem quite adequate in our eyes. There was no custom in 1739 requiring a Prime Minister to resign if he did not have his own way on a question of policy. He doubtless was naturally reluctant to surrender power to a group whose chief object was not so much the defeat of his policy as the proscription of himself. Also his confidence in his own capacity to avert more blunders fortified his desire to remain. He knew that his opponents as they then stood were incapable of forming a strong government, of conducting a war with vigor, and that not one of them was camparable to himself in experience, knowledge, or ability, either as negotiator or Administrator. As a matter of fact he did ask the King's permission to resign, though he did not insist upon it. The King exclaimed, "Will you desert me in my greatest difficulties?", and refused to acknowledge his resignation. Last, and probably not least, we must remember that Walpole had a great love of power for its own sake.

None of these pleas in Walpole's defense can extenuate this grave and regrettable error. His resignation would surely have made him the most formidable of critics, and because of the weakness of his probable successors, he might

well have been back in power in a short itme. He most assuredly "would have risen in the opinion of his own age, and have secured the applause of posterity."[1] As the writer looks back upon the situation, there is one alternative which the nineteenth century Prime Ministers had on such occasions, but of which Walpole does not seem to have thought; at least, if he thought of it he did not choose to follow it. That is, he might have appealed to the people. Even with its attendant corruption, the people, had they had the opportunity, would in all probability have been able to return a House of Commons at a general election which would have voted in favor of war. We cannot conceive of a modern Prime Minister failing to resort to this expedient. So we see that this is one of the features of the office that was not yet recognized.

We now must consider what is perhaps the most important single event in the entire history of the development of the office of Prime Minister; Walpole's resignation in 1742. Before that time there had been several attacks made upon him in the House of Commons, the principal one in 1741. However, the sands of his Ministry were running out. His physical powers were collapsing, and the Cabinet seethed with political intrigue and treachery.[2] Hardwicke and Newcastle supported the King, who desired to add a war on the continent to the war with Spain. Motions against the conducting of the campaign arose in both Houses, but were defeated by slim majorities. At length the Ministers failed to carry a vote in the Lower House

1 Coxe, Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, Vol. IV, p. 125.
2 Robertson, p. 83.

1 Coxe. Memoirs of the Life and Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, Vol. IV, p. 128.
2 Robertson, p. 88.

on a petition concerning the Chippenham election. The issue itself, of course, was of relatively little importance, but the significance of what followed is indeed great. Walpole had met other attacks with an undaunted spirit, but was now convinced that for the head of a Cabinet rent by dissension to carry on the King's business in defiance of a vote of no confidence by the representative chamber was impossible. On February 2, 1742, he resigned, and on February 9th he became the Earl of Orford and ceased to be a Minister of the Crown.

Before we press our conclusions on the resignation let us digress for a moment on a minor point. Impeachment was still naturally regarded as the proper process against Ministers who had gravely offended a triumphant majority. It was the only way then known of securing responsibility to Parliament. But by 1742 the remarkable growth of the Cabinet system tended to substitute the joint responsibility of the whole body of Ministers for the personal responsibility of an individual Minister. To impeach a whole Cabinet would be practically absurd, and impossible. A political impeachment would now be a glaring inconsistency, for the Minister can do nothing except as Parliament sanctions his action. How then can a House of Commons impeach him for what it has not passively allowed, but actively promoted?[1] So, with the advent of the party system had evolved a quiet and peaceful method of deposing a Minister by action of Parliament.

1 Blauveult, p. 206.

Returning to our main point, we will observe that Walple finally resigned, not because he had lost the confidence of the Crown, but the confidence of Parliament. Walpole could have carried on the Government without the support of the House of Commons if anyone could, but he had demonstrated, by both his successes and failures, that it was impossible. "The house of commons learned as well that it had in its hands absolute power of control over any Ministry by the simple method of allowing no business to be done until an obnoxious minister retired,....."[1] So he had inoculated the leaders on the Treasury and Front opposition Bench with the essential doctrines of Ministerial rights, duties, and privileges.[2] The total effect of Walpole's policy as it was finally carried through was to establish the Cabinet on a definite footing as the seat and centre of the Executive Government, to maintain the Executive in the closest relation with the Legislature, to govern through the Legislature, and to transfer the authority and power of the Crown to the House of Commons.

Carteret's Ministry, which followed Walpole's, is simply an affirmation of the fact that the Prime Minister owes his position to the House of Commons. There could be no real Prime Minister at this time because nobody desired the continuance of a "sole or Prime Minister," and if they had, there was no one capable of playing the part. Carteret came the closest to fulfilling that position because he possessed the King's confidence. He was highly unpopular with the people, however,

1 Adams, Constitutional History of England, p. 393. Referred to hereafter as Adams.

2 Robertson, p. 187.

because under him the war which had formerly been carried on simply as a fulfillment of a treaty with Maria Theresa, now became one, the cause of which was the dismemberment of France. But the cause of Carteret's failure is more basic than that. He never had a majority in the House of Commons; he had not even a party. He never seems to have grasped the relationship between the Ministers and a representative House of Commons under the conditions of Parliament and Parliamentary Government. Carteret felt tolerably sure of his security so long as the King favored him. But when the actual decision had to be made, George II found that no course was open except the dismissal of Carteret, even though it was against his wishes. So we see once more that the Prime Minister owes his position to the Lower House, and not to the King.

The next event of importance to us occurred during the Pelham Administration (1744 - 1754) in 1746. George had never heartily acquiesced in the ascendency of the Pelhams, and especially disliked the Duke of Newcastle.[1] The King now made another attempt to appoint Ministers pleasing to him by appealing to Granville, who was still in Royal favour. The Pelham brothers, though chief Ministers of the Crown, were treated with scant courtesy by George II. They saw that the King would get rid of them if he could, so they decided to consolidate their Administration by offering an office to William Pitt, who was exceedingly popular outside of Parliament, and who had no little influence within it. Pitt, however, was

1 Henry Pelham's brother.

decidedly not in the good graces of the King, and the latter refused to admit him to the Ministry. The Pelhams had forseen a refusal on the part of the King and had wisely, if perhaps unpatriotically, chosen a time to make their demand when he particularly needed a strong Government; the particular difficulty with which George was confronted at that time was an insurrection in the country.[1] They, and many others of the Cabinet, offered their resignations to the King, upon his refusal to admit Pitt, which were accepted in spite of his precarious position. George now directed Granville and the Earl of Bath to form an Administration, but the new Ministers could not command over eighty in the House of Commons and thirty in the House of Lords. Scarcely any one of reputation could be induced to serve under the new chiefs. After two days they gave up hope of any success and the old Ministers were recalled. Pitt was now given a place in the Ministry.

The Pelham Ministry, then, by a collective resignation, forced the Crown to admit Pitt to office. Their success was due to the retention of a Parliamentary majority, and to their collective action. The Crown found itself unable either to form a rival Administration or to secure for it Parliamentary support. George II in two years, was thus compelled to part with Carteret, whom he trusted, and to accept Pitt, whom he

1 The cause of this insurrection was the attempt of Charles Edward, the grandson of James II, to establish himself upon the throne of England. Most of the trouble occurred in Scotland, but at one time it seemed as if the plot might be successful and it did cause no little disturbance in England.

distrusted. This event simply proved what a united Ministry could do when it rested on the organized control of the Lower House. Corollaries and sequences of this were reserved for a later generation to work out and adopt.[1]

Pelham's source of power in the House of Commons was the same as Walpole's; in other words, bribery. The babel of parties that had united to crush Walpole, and separated again to pursue their own private interests, were now all sunk into a dull mercenary subjection to the two brothers.[2] Pelham employed any means to take men out of the Opposition, and was so successful in his efforts that the Opposition was reduced to a nonentity. This Ministry came to an end in 1754 with the death of Pelham.

The Duke of Newcastle, as we know, now became Prime Minister. His relations with the House of Commons seem to present a peculiar problem to the student, but we will give a brief account of his Ministry from this angle and attempt to draw some conclusions from it. Horace Walpole said that the chief source of his power was "nobody knows what." He was without secrecy or policy, a Minister despised and hated by the King and by all parties and Ministers, without being turned out by any. Wilmington describes him as seeming to have lost a half hour in the morning and to be running after it all the rest of the day. By such men as Walpole and Pitt he was even treated with gross contempt. He delighted beyond anything else in the secret and corrupt management of Parliament, and in the last

1. Robertson, p. 107. 2. Walpole, George II, V. I, p. 228.

analysis this corruption was doubtless the real source of his power. Walpole wrote his character in a word; "Perfidy."

The Duke of Newcastle, despite the fact that he wielded great influence in the Lower House, naturally could not lead that body personally. The fact that there was no leader left in the House of Commons was the principal cause of the general confusion as to who should be Prime Minister on the death of Pelham. Newcastle did not want more power than Pelham and Walpole had enjoyed, but did want as much, and to obtain that he realized that he needed a man to lead the House of Commons. He now offered this leadership to Fox, but the latter refused to serve under Newcastle's conditions. He pointed out that it would be impossible to be an efficient Prime Minister unless he had full power. So, Thomas Robinson, a man absolutely ignorant of the ways and means in the House of Commons, and who was thoroughly useless politically, was substituted for Fox. Pitt said of him, "The Duke might just as well have sent his jackboot to lead us!"

Newcastle found it now impossible to get on without an efficient Minister to represent the Cabinet in the House of Commons, so he again offered the position to Fox, but with even less power than before. Fox, strangely enough, accepted. The situation was highly unsatisfactory to Fox, however, because it gave him too little power to control policy in accordance with his own ideas, and too much to escape responsibility for disasters which wrecked the Administration. Newcastle of course gave him as little actual power as possible, and

looked upon him merely as a tool. Had Fox been wise, he would have resigned in 1755. At any rate, Newcastle eventually demonstrated that it was not enough even to have an able leader in the House of Commons; he must also be possessed of sufficient power. In October, 1756, Fox gave up in disgust, and resigned. Newcastle now recognized that to carry on with Fox and Pitt both against him was impossible. After a last appeal to Pitt, whose support he had sought before, he reached the conclusion that not one man of sense would trust him any longer, and resigned on November 13, 1756. His resignation is unusual in that he still had the support of the House of Commons, and that it was not requested by the King. From all this we can only conclude that Newcastle was rudely undeceived in his belief that leadership was a synonym for party management and Cabinet reconstruction.[1] Also the point is brought home to us quite forcibly, that the Prime Minister should be the actual leader of the House of Commons. Harking back to Walpole, we see more clearly the wisdom of his refusal of a peerage.

It seems an inconsistency to what we have pointed out in the last few paragraphs that Pitt should come into power after Newcastle's fall, though he could command a following of no more than sixteen in the House of Commons. This seeming paradox will straighten itself out, however.

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The Duke of Devonshire, an ally of Pitt, who enjoyed the good will of all parties, undertook the Treasury, and formed what is known as the Devonshire-Pitt Administration. Seldom has a Ministry acceded to power with less apparent strength. The House of Commons was practically divided between the followers of Newcastle and Fox; but it was Pitt, who had advised no blunders, to whom the nation in its extremity turned. The last statement is literally true. It was the nation which demanded Pitt in 1756. His courage, passionate love of liberty, and attachment to the creed of the Revolution appealed to the public. Although he did not carry a single definite measure increasing the power of the people or diminishing the corrupt influence of the Crown or aristocracy, "it may be said, without a paradox, that he did more for the popular cause than any ~~other~~ statesman since the generation that effected the Revolution."[1]

He gloried in the realization that he was essentially the representative of the people, and declared, even before the Privy Council, that he had been called to office by the voice of the people, and that he considered himself accountable to them alone. The great towns, especially London, supported him. His popularity was greater than any other statesman's. Blauveult goes further and says that he was not only the first, but the only Prime Minister to be appointed neither by the King, nor by Parliament, but by the people. Later Prime Ministers have represented public opinion no less than he, but they have been

1 Lecky, A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, Vol. II, p.561.

appointed by Parliament acting as the agent of the people; not by the people acting against the Parliament. It is no wonder in this state of affairs that George II said to Pitt, "Sir, you have taught me to look for the sense of my people in another place than the House of Commons." And though the King was convinced that Pitt would not do his business, he could do nothing but accept him as his Prime Minister.

Such popularity in our own day would enable a statesman to defy all opposition. But this was not the case in 1757 and Pitt soon found himself incapable of conducting a Government without the assistance of borough patronage and the aristocracy, or of resisting the hostility of the Crown. Pitt was ignorant and disdainful of political organization, and party tactics, and his Ministry had many enemies. Also his influence with the King and the general public had waned somewhat because of his intervention on behalf of Byng.[1] But the main reason for his fall was that he could not obtain a vigorous support in the House of Commons. He was still the favorite of the people, but scarcely had a party in the Lower Chamber. His dismissal was indeed an act of personal sovereignty on the part of the King, but it was one which would never have been ventured upon had the Minister possessed an enthusiastic following in the Lower House. Thus it was proved that even conspicuous ability and great popularity were alone not enough to assure success to the leader of the House of Commons; he must have a following in that House.

1 John Byng was an Admiral in the British navy who was court-martialled and executed for his action, or lack of action, at Minorca during the Seven Years' War.

Upon Pitt's dismissal in 1757, his place was taken by the Duke of Cumberland, a man who was widely detested, but who was very close to the King. The former Prime Minister, however, was now acutely aware that he could not maintain himself in office except by a coalition which would enable him to command the House of Commons. With this in mind, he turned to Newcastle, who had taken no steps to supplant him in the government. Pitt's nature was still very dictatorial, in spite of the fact that he was seeking aid, and the two could not at first agree on terms. After some bargaining, a compromise was arrived at, and Pitt was again virtually Prime Minister. Newcastle brought to the coalition a vast mass of power which had descended to him from Walpole and Pelham, while Pitt, on the other hand, had what Newcastle wanted: purity and eloquence. Each occupied a province for which he was well qualified, and for the time being, at least, neither had any inclination to intrude into the sphere of the other. Newcastle took the Treasury and the disposal of bribery money; Pitt was Secretary of State with the direction of the war, and of foreign affairs. In time, however, all eyes were directed to Pitt, and Newcastle's existence was forgotten except by those who were looking for places. He grumbled, to be sure, but for the most part his fears and suspicions were kept to himself. Bute proved to be troublesome more than once, but on the whole Pitt's path was absolutely cleared of obstacles. He had inspired every class in the country with his own unconquerable spirit, and had at

last won the complete support of the King. Furthermore, because almost all the worthy men were included in the coalition Cabinet, there was no organized Opposition in Parliament, and Pitt found himself absolutely supreme in the House of Commons. As Macaulay puts it, "Several years passed during which Parliament seemed to have abdicated its chief functions. The Journals of the House of Commons, during four sessions, contain no trace of a division on a party question. The supplies, though beyond precedent great, were voted without discussion."[1]

This peaceful state of affairs in the Government lasted until 1761 when the question of war with Spain came up. Pitt was prepared to take the responsibility of such a war, because of the "Family Compact" which had just been concluded, and was resolved to strike at once. The King, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to Pitt in this matter and was much irritated by his conduct. In three successive Cabinet Councils the question was debated, and at length, Pitt, finding himself supported only by Lord Temple, rose with great warmth, declaring that he was called to the Ministry by the voice of the people, to whom he considered himself accountable for his conduct, and he would not remain in a situation which made him responsible for measures which he was no longer allowed to guide.[2] His resignation in 1761 was a public calamity as it deprived the Administration of the one great master of higher leading, and left the self-willed King, and the inexperienced Bute to manipulate the situation as they pleased.

1 Macaulay, p. 22.
2 Lecky, Vol. III, p. 37.

Although George Grenville was the leader of the House of Commons in 1762, Bute, largely by virtue of his intimacy with the King, became Prime Minister. As we have seen previously, Newcastle did not go out of office with Pitt but lingered until the early part of 1762. Bute now undoubtedly committed a great error in forcing him to resign, for if Newcastle had been suffered to play at being first Minister, as he had throughout the previous Administration, Bute might securely and quietly have enjoyed the substance of power. Now, by the severe methods of the King, largely exerted through the channel of Bute, the Whigs were again united into organized opposition. They came more than ever to be considered as the popular party, because they professed to uphold the rights of the people against an undue exercise of the prerogative. Bedford and Mansfield constantly opposed Bute in the Cabinet, and he soon found himself isolated in that body. He saw that there was not only danger of falling himself, but of bringing his master also to ruin, and so, he resigned on April 8th, 1763 after having been in office only eleven months.

Although the Whig Opposition may have been a powerful factor in causing his resignation, the real reason for it was his terrific unpopularity with the nation as a whole. Bute had succeeded in breaking up an all-powerful Administration, but he had also made himself the most hated Minister since Strafford's day. There were several reasons for this. He was on very familiar terms with the King, and no character in England is more detested than a Court favourite; the scandal about the

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relations of Bute and the King's mother was eagerly accepted; and his Scotch nationality particularly counted against him in England. All this gave rise to the cries of the mob, "No petticoat Government; no Scotch Minister." So unpopular was he, says Lecky, that he could not appear unattended and undisguised in the streets, and at times even his life was endangered. Bute had no great resolution of character, was weak in health, and had nothing to gain by staying in office, so it was no wonder that he soon quailed before the storm. All this shows the growing power of popular opinion in English government, even in the selection of a Prime Minister, who certainly in those days was not dependent upon the electorate for his power. Grenville now became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. (1763)

The Administration of Grenville(1763 - 1765) is without significance for our present purposes. That of Rockingham (1765 - 1766) which followed it, is chiefly notable for the part which Pitt played in it, or rather failed to play, so we will consider it from this angle. Before we do that, however, to explain Pitt's actions at this time, it is essential that we acquaint the reader more fully with Pitt's ideas of government, and of party in particular. Robertson says he completely misinterpreted the working of the Parliamentary system.[1] He never seems to have realized the vitalizing secret that underlies the conditions of Parliamentary self-government; that the deliberate association of public men for public ends is not a trick but a duty, and that party is not a faction, but the

1 Robertson, p. 242.

realization of that duty. His strange neglect of the machinery at his hand put him at the mercy of George III. "Without the support of the collective coöperation of colleagues united by a common creed a King's Minister must either become the King's tool or the King's enemy, fighting alone a hopeless battle."[1] With his passion for imperialism, freedom, and reform, he could have united the old and new Whiggism, but didn't. He was anxious to assist in dissolving political connection, but he made far too little distinction between "gangs of knaves associated for the mere purpose of robbing the public, and confederacies of honorable men for the promotion of great public objects."[2] Nor had he the sagacity to perceive that the strenuous efforts which he made to annihilate all parties tended only to establish the supremacy of one party, and that the basest and most hateful of all.[3] So much for Pitt's views on party.

With this view of Pitt, it is easy to see why, when an appeal was made to him to do so, he refused to take office under Rockingham. Rockingham's Government was based on the influence of the Whig Houses and not on the good will of the Crown and people. Without him the Rockingham Ministry did not have a chance of permanence and gradually became weaker. Difficulties which had stood in Pitt's way were removed by one means or another, and finally George seized the opportunity of ousting the existing Ministry and replacing it with a more comprehensive Cabinet with Pitt at the head. His statement on acceptance was

1 Robertson, p. 242.
2 Macaulay, p. 89.
3 The King's Party.

realization of that duty. His strange neglect of the machinery at his hand put him at the mercy of George III. "Without the support of the collective cooperation of colleagues united by a common creed a King's Minister must either become the King's tool or the King's enemy, fighting alone a hopeless battle."[1] With his passion for imperialism, freedom, and reform, he could have united the old and new Whiggism, but didn't. He was anxious to assist in dissolving political connection, but he made far too little distinction between "gangs of knaves associated for the mere purpose of robbing the public, and confederacies of honorable men for the promotion of great public objects."[2] Nor had he the sagacity to perceive that the strenuous efforts which he made to annihilate all parties tended only to establish the supremacy of one party, and that the basest and most hateful of all.[3] So much for Pitt's views on party.

With this view of Pitt, it is easy to see why, when an appeal was made to him to do so, he refused to take office under Rockingham. Rockingham's Government was based on the influence of the Whig Houses and not on the good will of the Crown and people. Without him the Rockingham Ministry did not have a chance of permanence and gradually became weaker. Difficulties which had stood in Pitt's way were removed by one means or another, and finally George seized the opportunity of uniting the existing Ministry and replacing it with a more comprehensive Cabinet with Pitt at the head. His statement on acceptance was

1 Robertson, p. 246.
2 Macaulay, p. 83.
3 The King's Party.

that he was delighted "to defend the closet against every contending party"; against, that is, the great Whig Houses and their connections.[1] Pitt regarded party with such little attention that he was persuaded by the King to accept a peerage and he now became the Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords, where he would be even more independent of the affairs in the Lower House. The main secret of his unrivalled influence, as we have seen, was the conviction of the people that he owed his power to them. He had been in the midst of the corruption of an essentially aristocratic Government, the great representative of the democracy of England. Now the spell was broken. "The revulsion of feeling was immediate and irrevocable."[2] Furthermore he lost what power he had in the House of Commons because there was nobody else in the Ministry who had the authority and ascendancy over them that he had. His best representative there was now the irresolute Conway. In short, Pitt's project of breaking up and ruling over all parties, completely failed. Having offended and exasperated the Whigs, he found himself at the head of an Administration composed of the "King's Friends" who had thwarted him, and of discordant elements over which he had no control.[3] As a matter of fact, there was so much discord in this Cabinet that we can hardly consider Chatham to have been a real Prime Minister; certainly he was not such in the modern sense. We have already seen how his administration came to an end with his illness in 1767.

1 Hunt, p. 73, from the Correspondence of Conway to Hertford.
2 Lecky, Vol. III, p. 123.
3 May, Constitutional History of England, Vol. I, p. 46.

After secession from business for nearly three years, Chatham reappeared on the political stage with a changed attitude toward Rockingham. His endeavor to crush that party had evidently been in the expectation that the power thus subtracted from them would be added to his own share, but he discovered too late that he had been a mere instrument in the hands of the Court. He now believed that only a thorough union between those who thought alike on political subjects could save the country, and with that in mind he sought an alliance with the Rockingham party. It is surely evidence enough of George III's power in Parliament in 1770 that he felt strong enough to ignore this combination, once invincible, and call in the North Administration.

It may prove interesting at this point to say a few words concerning Edmund Burke's views on party and his attitude toward Chatham's conception of party. Burke saw in it the sole method of putting an end to the impotence of successive Administrations and restraining the influence of the Crown. "How men can proceed without any (party) connection at all is to me utterly incomprehensible."[1] There are "ambitious men of light or no principles, who in their turns make use of all parties, and therefore avoid entering into what may be construed into an engagement with any. Such ... was in a great measure the late Earl of Chatham, who expected a very blind submission of men to him without considering himself as having any reciprocal obligation to them."[2]

1 Lecky, Vol. III, p.213, quoting from Burke's Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents.

2 Lecky, Vol. III, p.217, quoting from Burke's Correspondence, ii, 276,277.

The influence of the Court was so great that in both Houses it commanded a steady and unflinching majority. After a violent ferment in the nation, wrote Burke, as remarkable a deadness has succeeded, . . The people have fallen into a total indifference to matters of any public concern. Such was the general situation in 1770.

VI. Cabinet Unity - Supremacy of Prime Minister in Cabinet 1700 - - 1770

We now revert to the Walpole Administration for the last time, and will consider Walpole and his successors from the standpoint of their relations with their Cabinets; in other words how much unity there was in their Cabinets, and how much authority these eighteenth century Prime Ministers enjoyed over their colleagues. In the Cabinet of the nineteenth century it was regarded as essential that the Ministers should act as a unit in matters of Government policy, and that the Prime Minister should be supreme in the Cabinet. In other words, there should be Ministerial responsibility among the Cabinet members, as well as to Parliament; each Minister should act and speak, at least outside of Cabinet meetings, in accord with his brother Ministers. Furthermore, each Minister must hold the same views as his Chief on Government measures, or resign from the Cabinet. Walpole did not completely establish these precedents, by any means, but he did take considerable strides in that direction. Let us examine his administration from this angle.

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Walpole it was who, as Prime Minister, first ousted rebel Ministers from the Cabinet; Carteret, Roxburgh, Townsend, and the opponents of the Excise Tax are examples. We will examine each case in turn. First we quote Walpole himself as it shows his attitude toward such Ministers. "A (Prime) Minister must be a very pitiful fellow...if he did not turn out those who pretended to meddle with the civil government."[1]

Carteret was the Foreign Secretary in the Walpole-Townshend Cabinet. Let us first briefly outline the actual circumstances which led up to his dismissal, and then discuss it for our purposes. Townshend and Walpole had inherited, from the previous Administration the French Alliance, which was to secure for the Emperor the terms agreed by the treaty of Madrid. By 1723, owing to the death of the Regent of Orleans and of Dubois, the French policy was no longer in the hands of the authors of this Alliance, and the Anglo-French understanding alone prevented France from forming a Franco-Russian Alliance. Carteret sought to checkmate Russian ascendancy in the Baltic; but he also sought to strengthen his position by Court influence, instead of by solid political connections. The union with France was now held as essential to the peace of Europe and England, so the Ministers who held the most credit at the Court of Versailles were held in the highest estimation by George I. Naturally it was a matter of great concern for Townshend and Walpole to have their own confidential ambassador at Paris, and by these measures to prevent their opponent, Carteret,

1 Robertson, p. 187.

from preserving his weight in the Cabinet. It was in their interest, therefore, to obtain his removal and to substitute some person in whom they could place implicit confidence, whose appointment should prove acceptable to the French Court, and convince both friends and adversaries in England of their ascendancy in the Cabinet.[1] Carteret failed to gain more favor with the King for the latter was convinced that the adoption of the violent measures proposed by the Foreign Secretary against Russia must have involved England in war with the Tsar,[2] and also George was satisfied with the prosperous state of domestic affairs. So the young Duke of Newcastle took Carteret's place without further Royal objections, and Walpole's right to direct the sphere of Foreign Policy with Ministers of his own choosing was established (1724). Carteret was transferred to the Vice-Royalty of Ireland, which meant he was virtually excluded from the Cabinet.

Ballantyne's view of the Carteret episode is doubtless prejudiced, but it does give us an idea of how Walpole's actions have been judged by many writers. In Walpole's Cabinet to be a mediocrity was to be safe. Carteret would not be a mere political nonentity, and as Walpole's "frightened jealousy" would tolerate nothing else, Carteret, after three years, accordingly had to go.[2] Also, the fact that Carteret was in favor with the King, owing partly to the fact that he could speak German, did not tend to make him popular with Walpole. A fairer view of the dismissal, the writer believes,

1 Coxe, Walpole's Memoirs, Vol. II, p. 109.
2 Ballantyne, Carteret, p. 67.

is this. To the charge of Walpole's jealousy of power in others in his Cabinet it is sufficient to say the Carteret was quite as busy in striving to remove Walpole and Townshend, as they were in excluding him, finally, "Walpole would have stultified himself and ruined his whole policy if he had allowed a minister to remain in charge of so momentous a branch of business as foreign affairs", who felt he was superior to his position and refused to coöperate with Walpole himself.[1] The Carteret displacement was Walpole's first step toward showing that he would not tolerate insubordination by Cabinet members.

The ousting of Roxburgh is simply another move by Walpole in the same direction. Soon after the Prime Minister was rid of Carteret a bill was passed levying a tax on ale in Scotland, and there were disturbances in that country as a result of it. The Duke of Roxburgh, Secretary of State for Scotland, did his best to help on these disturbances, and was dismissed from the Cabinet for his pains.

The displacement of Townshend, who was Walpole's brother-in-law, in 1729, marks the definite establishemnt of Walpole as the undisputed head of the Cabinet. The Administration which replaced Stanhope and Sunderland in 1721 was a business partnership of Walpole and Townshend in which the chief control of affairs fell to Townshend as Secretary of State. As finances were really the dominant issue, and as Walpole was occupied with the "King's Business" in the Commons and in finance,

1 Morley, p. 70.

he was regarded as the Prime Minister, though the two really were coördinate in authority. Upon the accession of George II in 1727, however, Walpole's friendship with Caroline now gave him the same preëminence in the councils of the King that Townshend had in the previous reign enjoyed by his favour with the Duchess of Kendall; this change swung the balance in Walpole's favour. Walpole had early realized that the situation of each having a sphere of power was a decided weakness, and that a trial of strength would have to come eventually. The real issue came as it had with Carteret, in the field of foreign policy. Townshend, with France as an ally, was eager to build up a counter-European trade system, and in September, 1725, concluded the Treaty of Hanover, an alliance with Prussia. He also desired to break with the Empress of Spain and to use the newly formed confederation to compel Spain to give way. Walpole was not a little perturbed by the precipitate manner in which the treaty had been concluded, was averse to foreign entanglements anyway, and was reluctant to go to war with Spain, as such a breach would be an abrupt departure from Whig traditions. War with Spain, for the time being at least, was averted, and this was a preliminary victory for Walpole. He had hitherto contented himself with a general hand in foreign politics, but this treaty of Hanover was a measure of which he definitely disapproved, for which he would have to find the money if it was to be carried out, and which he would have to defend in a House of Commons where it was extremely unpopular. He now openly expressed

his views and gave it to be understood that the man who devised the means, and who persuaded the House of Commons to pass the measure, must have a dominant voice in the policy. In the Spring of 1730, Walpole, backed by Newcastle and the Queen, again disagreed with Townshend as to the advisability of a war with Spain. Walpole, in addition, managed the House of Commons and was supported by far more friends than Townshend could boast. Their differences on foreign policy, on Parliamentary tactics, on patronage, and the assured position of Walpole in the Royal closet, at length caused Townshend to perceive that his position was secondary, and he resigned on May 15, 1730. He would not carry out a policy of which he disapproved; neither would he join Carteret and other notable Whigs in opposition to his brother-in-law. So he gave up public life and left Walpole master in his own Cabinet. This went a long way toward establishing the principle that Cabinet unity and efficiency required the agreement of Ministers on political principles, in practice the principles of the most influential chief; also that individual independence of Ministers is fatal to an effective Parliamentary and Cabinet Government. It also proved that the Prime Minister's place "would be automatically taken by the Minister who could make himself indispensable to his Sovereign and Parliament, and whose insight and ability would teach him how to build and maintain a Ministry based on parliamentary support, and its capacity to promote national interest, as interpreted by a majority of the nation's representatives."[1] After the resignation

1 Robertson, p. 51.

of Townshend, Walpole had the chief direction of policy; foreign, domestic, and financial.

We come again to the Excise Tax of 1733, which, we will remember, Walpole declined to force through Parliament. When this measure became an issue there were several Ministers who opposed Walpole's policy; among them were the Duke of Bolton, Montrose, Lord Stair, and Lord Chesterfield. Walpole, when the affair was over, did not shrink from making the weight of his resentment felt on some of those who held great posts under the Crown, and who yet had ventured to thwart the First Minister of the Crown. Those mentioned above were all deprived of their places in the Government. Walpole has been frequently accused of dismissing these men because they showed talent and independence. This is a foolish condemnation, as he only acted upon a principle which is now part of the accepted foundation of Cabinet Government, and without which nobody today would either form a Government, or expect to be a member of a Government. It is true that the bills were dropped, but what Minister would have gone on with a colleague who had helped to force him to drop them.

It is interesting to note that Walpole thought it necessary to justify himself for removing these Ministers, and to deny that any servant of the Crown had been removed from office on account of having opposed measures of the Administration. "'Certain persons', he (Walpole) said, 'had been removed because his Majesty did not think best to continue them longer in service. ..... I cannot see, therefore, how this can be imputed as a crime, or how any of the King's ministers can be blamed, <u>for his doing</u>

what the public has no concern in, for if the public be well and faithfully served, it has no business to ask by whom.'"[1] By this affair we see again that Walpole's conception of a Ministry was not a group of independent officeholders voting as their interests or ambitions dictated, but a union of the Crown's servants chosen from a party because they could unite in common action, on a common policy, for the benefit of their country.[2]

At this point it is interesting to make one or two observations on Walpole's assertion of authority in the Cabinet. Blauveult says that he has often been censured because he never allowed a man of abilities such as might rival his own to enter the Cabinet. Yet it is a fact that, as a rule, the strongest and most efficient Cabinets have always been those in which there was the greatest distance between the Prime Minister and his colleagues. "Cabinet unity, upon which Cabinet efficiency so largely depends, would seem to be conditioned upon this."[3]

Another point is that whatever may be said for Walpole's doctrine of Ministerial subordination, his intolerance of rivalry was constantly adding recruits of talent to the numbers arrayed against him in the Opposition. Indeed, the strength of the Opposition that eventually overwhelmed him was mainly due to the number of men of talent whom he had discarded. Among them were Lord Chesterfield, the Duke of Montrose, and Lord Marchmont.

1 Blauveult, p. 237. (Italics are in the original.)
2 Robertson, p. 70.
3 Blauveult, p. 223.

Walpole's supreme power in the Cabinet could not last forever, however, and as early as 1735 there were vague mutterings of dissatisfaction among his Ministers. He himself was at least partly the cause of this dissatisfaction, for in the opinion of Torrens, at least, he had become over-confident, careless, insolent, and drunk with power.[1] He had ceased to believe in the worth of any judgment but his own, which is not so remarkable if we consider the flourishing state of the Kingdom at the time. The Ministers, however, chafed at arbitrary decisions come to before they met in council, and slowly the once all-powerful Prime Minister's omnipotence in the Cabinet began to rot.[2] Walpole was forced to consent to the war in 1739 because the King and most of the Cabinet were opposed to him, and to several other measures of which he did not approve, as well. The Duke of Newcastle was particularly irritating to him, as he flung himself eagerly into the hands of the war party. There were, by 1740, not more than three members of the Cabinet upon whom Walpole could securely count, and at the close of his Administration he was not able to exercise much control over his Ministers. He wished to dismiss Newcastle, but dared not because of his ever growing influence in Parliament. To conclude, his fall was due almost as much to the opposition of his colleagues as to the Opposition in the House of Commons. In his resignation, then, he was true to his principles. So long as it was possible to maintain discipline in the Administration, he maintained it;

1 Like all such radical statements, this may be taken with a grain of salt.
2 Torrens, History of Cabinets, Vol. I, p. 492.

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2 Torrens, History of Cabinets, Vol. I, p. 492.

when this was no longer possible he resigned.

As this is the last occasion which we will have to devote any attention to Sir Robert Walpole, we will summarize, as briefly and with as few digressions as possible, his effect upon the office of Prime Minister. Since Walpole's accession to power, it was understood that the members of the Administration should coöperate by acting on Whig principles. They were still however the King's servants; not the subordinates of a Premier. Walpole succeeded in impressing upon the Queen that the weakness imposed on the head of a Government by the toleration of independence in the ranks of the Ministerial hierarchy reacted unfavourably, eventually, upon the Crown. From this time dates the responsibility of a Cabinet to its head, who is in turn responsible for its policy to the Sovereign.[1] Walpde's creation of the office of Prime Minister was not due to foresight, as we have pointed out before, but to the force of his own personality, his great political sense, and intuition, and perhaps to his love of power. The Prime Ministership then, in its early stages was at first nothing more than a position naturally created by superior qualities of leadership both in Cabinet deliberations and in the management of the House of Commons.

Although we consider the office of Prime Minister as essential to effective Cabinet government today, it was by no means regarded as such in 1742. A protest made against Walpole in the House of Lords at that time gives us an idea of the

1 - Leadham, p. 346.

public's opinion on the matter. "We are persuaded that a sole, or even a first, Minister is an officer unknown to the laws of Britain, inconsistent with the Constitution of this country, and destructive of liberty in any government whatsoever; and it plainly appears to us that Sir R. Walpole has, for many years, acted as such by taking upon himself the chief, if not the sole, direction of affairs in the different branches of the administration."[1] Walpole himself, at least in public, denied that he was Prime Minister. When replying to this charge he declares, "I unequivocally deny that I am sole and Prime Minister, and that to my influence and direction all the affairs of government must be attributed." "...as one of his Majesty's Council, I have but one voice."[2] A little later, however, he practically tells us his real convictions on the matter when he says, "I will not shrink from the responsibility that attaches to the post that I have the honor to hold: and should during the long period which I have sat upon the Bench, any one step taken by government be proved to be either disgraceful or disadvantageous to the nation, I am ready to hold myself accountable."[3] He felt it judicious to deny his real status because, although he was not living in the age of Hitler, he was of the eighteenth century which was itself none too gentle to political plotters.

One feature of the Cabinet established by Walpole, which is not used, theoretically at least today, was the so-called "Inner-Cabinet". It seems convenient at this time to

1 Robertson, p. 83, from Rogers, Protests of the Lords, ii, 10.
2 Blauveult, p. 226.
3 Blauveult, p. 226.

trace this through the entire eighteenth century. Walpole, as we might have expected from his character, called meetings of the entire Cabinet as seldom as possible. His habit was to invite two or three of his colleagues especially acquainted with the business in hand, to dine with him at his, or Townshend's residence, and there decide the policies to be followed. Thus almost all matters of importance were discussed first in an inner Cabinet consisting of the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor, and the two Secretaries of State. If it seemed desirable, the other Ministers were consulted later. These "Cabinet-dinners" were marked by the peculiarity and possible convenience that no minutes of the topics of discussion were necessarily sent to the Sovereign, as in the case of formal meetings. This may possibly have given rise to the present custom of the elimination of written reports from the modern cabinet meetings, though this is no more than a conjecture on the part of the writer. This arrangement of an "Inner-Cabinet" may have been partly due to the overwhelming political predominance of a few great Whig Houses in Walpole's day. Between 1742 and 1762 a continuation took place of an "inner" and an "outer" Cabinet between the titular and the real possessors of power. Nominal Cabinets numbered from fifteen to twenty, but within them existed a smaller group of Ministers who really decided policy. During the reign of George III there seems to have been an inner group of the more important and influential members, as there had been before, although, of course, the

size of this group was never rigidly fixed. Throughout the century, in short, there was for the most part a group in the Cabinet who came regularly and controlled the meetings. It was they who came to the private meetings of the Ministers and held the informal consultations. These men were the Secretaries of State, the great officials who ruled the principal departments of state — the Treasury, Admiralty, the Army and certain leaders important through their influence with the King, or from their own ability or ambition; such were Hardwicke, the Duke of Newcastle, Henry Pelham and William Pitt. More and more the other lesser Ministers tended to stay away from Cabinet meetings.[1]

At whatever date we choose first to see all the decisive marks of the remarkable Cabinet system which combines unity, steadfastness, and initiative in the Executive, with the possession of supreme authority alike over men and measures by the House of Commons, it is certain that it was under Walpole that its ruling principles were first fixed in Parliamentary Government, and that the Cabinet system then received the impression that it bears in our own time.[2] The Administration of Walpole in unity, discipline, and power was surpassed by few of the nineteenth century. By 1742, then, it was pretty well indicated that there was to be a Prime Minister who was to take the place of the King, who was to be the leader of the party in power in the House of Commons, and to be dependent upon a Parliamentary majority rather than Court favour; also

1 Turner, Vol. II, p. 80.
2 Morley, p. 142.

he was to preside over the Cabinet, composed of men of the same party, who were to act as a unit under him.

The position of Prime Minister implies a peculiar combination of personal qualities; it is interesting at this point to contemplate Horace Walpole's conception of these requisite qualities. "The first quality of a Prime Minister in a free country is to have more common sense than any (other) man." Tact, business talent, knowledge of men, resolution, promptitude, and sagacity in dealing with immediate emergencies, a character which lends itself easily to conciliation, diminishes friction, and implies confidence, are essential and they are more likely to be found among shrewd and enlightened men of the world than among men of great original genius, or of an heroic type of character.[1] Carteret, Henry Pelham, Newcastle, Chatham - none of them was from this point of view as well fitted for the office as was Robert Walpole, and as a result we find that, for the most part the unity and character that Walpole and his system gave to the cabinet in the first phases of the reign of George II are but faintly traceable under the leadership of these men.

Upon Walpole's resignation the Ministers were indeed in a powerful position, but they were not so radical as to attempt to change the whole Administration. There were only three important replacements, most of Walpole's Cabinet being retained. Spencer Compton, an old favorite of the King, took Walpole's place as First Lord of the Treasury, Carteret became Secretary of State, and Pulteney was given a seat in the Cabinet

1 Lecky, Vol. V, p. 2.

without office. That the whole Cabinet did not change with the new Prime Minister was only natural, as the custom of Ministerial responsibility to each other was not yet firmly established.

Carteret's Cabinet was marked by dissension throughout his period of office, and for that dissension there were several reasons. In the first place the only issue upon which this "Broad Bottom" Cabinet[1] was ever really even partially united was in the ousting of Walpole. So they were not bound together by a common opinion on questions of the day, but by an object which they had already achieved. Also it was evident that the friends of Walpole who remained in the Cabinet could not well agree with the new section which had driven Walpole from power. Anti-Hanoverian feeling in the Cabinet, Parliament, and nation was another factor which tended to disrupt the Administration. Carteret, of course, was a favorite of the King, and this did not tend to make him at all popular as leader of the Cabinet. Probably the main reason for the lack of harmony in the Administration was Carteret himself. Without the Parliamentary leadership, which Walpole had recognized as the only justification for Cabinet leadership, Carteret attempted to fill an even more arbitrary position in the Cabinet than Walpole had enjoyed. Trusting to his favour with the King, he treated the other Ministers as mere ciphers, and ignored, almost completely, the Cabinet, in which he was outvoted by four to one. He scoffed and ranted at his colleagues and treated them with supercilious contempt. Carteret did not

1 Coalition Cabinet.

even control a majority in the Cabinet on foreign policy, in the realm of which he was supposed to be supreme. By the summer of 1744 it was evident that the Government, with its attendant disunion, could not meet a new session of Parliament as it stood. The Pelham brothers and Lord Hardwicke were particularly jealous of Carteret and their political intriguing was now reënforced by public misrepresentation. Everything that had failed at home or abroad was laid to the charge of Carteret; indeed, he was even accused of prolonging the war for his own selfish ambition. The Pelhams, after a little coaxing, of various sorts, succeeded in rallying every disconted Whig against Carteret. Finally, feeling reassured by this support, Hardwicke drew up a long Memorial denouncing Carteret's conduct and policy. Newcastle handed the document to the King and told him to choose between their resignations and Carteret's. The King in his distress sent for Walpole, who was still very influential, though not really in the Government, who advised him to abide by the wishes of the majority in the Cabinet. Carteret was thus compelled to yield, and resigned in November 1744. It is true that his resignation was accomplised because of the preponderance of the Pelhams in Parliament, but it is also true that Cabinet dissension was a very important factor in forcing his resignation. There was so much dissension throughout Carteret's two years in office that serious question may well be raised as to whether he really was Prime Minister. Certainly he was not if we compare his position to that of the

Premier of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In some respects there is a striking similarity between Carteret's Administration and its successor, that of Henry Pelham (1744 - 1754.) Both were coalition Cabinets, Pelham had no great authority over his colleagues, and there was a certain amount of dissension among the ministers throughout the entire decade. The coalition was a political affair as it professed to include all parties of weight in the state in coalition. It comprised no less than nine Dukes.

The Pelham Administration was a triangular arrangement, the power being divided between Pelham, Newcastle, and Hardwicke. A very slight preëminence was given to Pelham. Pelham's authority was precarious, especially while Carteret possessed in a superior degree the favour of the King, and this was demonstrated when Carteret and Bath attempted to form their Administration in 1746. Pelham was somewhat timid, desponding, and fretful, and had little energy of character or intellect; nevertheless, he showed good sense, industry, knowledge of business, and Parliamentary experience. He was content to hold the reins of power loosely, freely allowing competitors to office, and permitting much divergence of opinion. He believed in silencing the Opposition by giving office to its most prominent members, a policy exactly opposite to that of Walpole, but one which was quite extensively followed by other Prime Ministers of the eighteenth century. None of these factors, however, was particularly conducive to harmony among the Ministers. The death

of the Earl of Orford in 1745 added to their difference because the connecting link between his adherents and Pelham was severed; they naturally separated into different parties, some going over into the ranks of the Opposition. Too, there were differences among the Cabinet members as to the foreign policy which should be pursued. Pelham and many of his subordinates believed that the accession of Prussia must be obtained, or that peace must be concluded on the most favourable terms that could be procured; in these views they were firmly opposed by the King, the Dukes of Cumberland and Newcastle. In fact, throughout the entire ten years we find that the brothers frequently disagreed on matters, at times almost to the point of violence. The King usually supported Pelham, but by 1751 the latter was so harassed by feuds in the Cabinet, the contentions in the House of Commons, and the fatigue of his official duties, that on the 30th of March he is said to have intimated a wish to resign as Prime Minister. George, apprehensive lest this should dissolve the Ministry, earnestly begged him to remain. In deference to his Sovereign, Pelham consented to retain his eminent, though irksome office, and he remained Prime Minister until his death in 1754.

Although one or two of the Prime Ministers holding office between 1754 and 1770 occupied a position of more authority in the Cabinet than did Pelham, their Administrations, like his, do not contain real Cabinet unity or Misisterial responsibility to any noticeable extent. The Ministers with whom we are

concerned are Newcastle (1754-1756), Chatham (1757-1762),[1] Bute (1762-1763), Grenville (1763-1765), Rockingham (1765-1766), Chatham (1766-1767), and Grafton (1767-1770).

The grovelling nature and love of office prevented Newcastle from commanding any respect whatever from his colleagues. Newcastle's jealousy of his ministers amounted to a disease, and he was determined to concentrate the control of the Government in his own hands. Pitt and Fox, slighted by the award of offices of no importance in the Ministry, were openly defiant of their chief. Pitt knew he had nothing to hope for from the Ministry as promotion had been refused him, and in November, 1754, he implored the House of Commons to beware lest it should degenerate into a little assembly serving no other purpose than to register the arbitrary edicts of one too powerful subject.[2] This amounted to a declaration of war on Newcastle, which was unfortunate at that time. A cabinet Minister of ability for the House of Commons was required because with foreign affairs and subsidy treaties growing more critical the policy pursued needed defense more than votes. Fox was as bad as Pitt in ridiculing and discrediting not only Robinson but Newcastle, and it was evident that any Prime Minister of common firmness would have dismissed subordinates guilty of such conduct. Instead, Newcastle, with characteristic timidity, preferred to make new overtures to Fox, who eventually accepted them, deserted from the Opposition to the Chiefs, and disclaimed all connection with Pitt. He was

1 Although he resigned in 1761, his Administration lasted until under Newcastle.
2 Leadham, p. 435.

called into the Cabinet Council in January, 1755.

Newcastle's conduct was now (1755) a miserable exhibition of weakness and vacillation. His love of office had become an absolute disease, and the idea of sacrificing it was intolerable to his mind. He was the undisputed leader of a party possessed of an immense majority in both Houses, yet no Prime Minister was ever less able to control insubordinate colleagues.[1] Not merely was there an absence of collective responsibility, but individual Ministers asserted their right to vote and speak against Government proposals without jeopardizing their official positions.[2] At length Pitt's condemnation of the continental foreign policy, as followed by the Cabinet, became intolerable even to Newcastle, and he was dismissed from office along with Legge and Grenville in the fall of 1755. We have already observed how Newcastle was at last forced to retire from office in 1756 because he could not lead the House of Commons.

We will skip the Devonshire-Pitt Administration as it has no significance from this standpoint, and consider the Newcastle-Pitt régime. Their Administration, characterized by Macaulay as being the most triumphantly successful Ministry in Britain's annals, was a typical coalition Government. Newcastle and Pitt were coördinate Chief Ministers, and the subordinate places were filled on the principle of including in the Government every party and shade of party; "nay, every

1 Lecky, Vol.II, p. 484.
2 Robertson, p. 188.

public man who, from his abilities or from his situation, seemed likely to be either useful in office or formidable in the opposition."[1] It was under this policy that room was found in the Government for two powerful Whig connections, either of which might have been the nucleus for a strong Opposition; the factions were the Grenvilles and the Bedfords. The head of the Grenvilles was Richard Earl Temple a man of no high talents of administration or debate, but whose great possessions, turbulent and unscrupulous character, restless activity, and skill in intrigue would have made him one of the most formidable enemies a Ministry could have had. He was made Keeper of the Privy Seal, and his brother, George, though he was known to be conspicuously opposed to the prosecution of the war, became Treasurer of the Navy.

Notwithstanding this checkered array of colleagues, Pitt maintained absolute supremacy over his Cabinet until 1760. Upon his first proposition for changing the conduct of the war he stood single among his colleagues, and tendered his resignation should they persist in their dissent. They at once succumbed and henceforth ceased to have an opinion of their own upon any branch of public affairs. So absolutely was he determined to have control of Government measures, for which he knew the responsibility rested upon him alone, that he insisted upon the First Lord of the Admiralty not having charge of the correspondence. Brougham makes the broad statement that Lord Anson, an eniment authority on such matters,

1. - Macaulay, p. 19.

was obliged to sign the naval orders by Pitt while the writing was covered over from his eyes.[1] So his Ministers were not advisers, but servants, being induced to yield to him implicit obedience, and to leave the individual direction of all operations in his hands.

Before long, however, these high-handed methods of the Prime Minister were bound to stir up dissatisfaction in the Cabinet. The unbounded arrogance with which the Ministers were treated gradually raised against him much animosity. In the Council they cowered before him like school boys, and when doubts were expressed as to whether sufficient funds could be raised, Pitt declared that in the case of the smallest failure, he would at once impeach the Commissioners of the Treasury, or Newcastle himself, before Parliament. Thus Newcastle lived in a state of mingled fear and resentment, while Fox could not forget that he had once been deemed the equal of Pitt.

The accession of George III probably had more to do with the disintegration of Pitt's Cabinet than anything else. By 1760 there were two distinct elements in the Cabinet, one led by Newcastle, and the other by Pitt, both of which were distasteful to the King. He knew that no one could be really King while Pitt was Prime Minister, so he sought to add to the existing jealousies. He saw that it was to his advantage to confine the Ministers as much as possible to their own Departments, and that they ought not to be suffered to form a coherent

1 Brougham, Historical Sketches of Statesmen who flourished in the time of George III (Essay on Lord Chatham), Vol.I,p.26. Referred to hereafter as Brougham.

and homogeneous whole. Pitt had long been on the coldest terms with Lord Bute, the "Favourite", as he was known, and he proposed a firm union with Newcastle against Bute. Newcastle, now thoroughly jealous of Pitt, took exactly the opposite course and proposed to the King that Bute should be offered an important office in the Administration. The King saw the advantages to be gained and followed Newcastle's advice by appointing Bute and several other members to the Ministry who were of no account, except that they were subservient to the King. The crisis arrived in 1761 when Pitt, as we have noted above, demanded instant war with Spain. The Cabinet, clinging to diplomacy because of the weakness of the army and the fleet, refused the demand. Pitt, supported by Temple alone, resigned because he would not remain in a situation which made him responsible for measures which he was no longer able to guide. It is uncertain whether Pitt and Newcastle together could have balanced the natural affection of the people for a new King or not, but Horace Walpole and Macaulay are of the opinion that such an alliance would have been capable of thwarting George III. The triumphant continental war had captivated the whole country and, furthermore, Bute was not well liked. At least the union of Pitt and Newcastle would have checked the torrent which soon carried everything in favour of Prerogative. So we see that Pitt was humbled largely by a disunited Cabinet.

Newcastle was still the nominal head of the Cabinet, but Lord Bute, the recently appointed Secretary of State, was treated by the King as the real First Minister. He undertook

the chief management of affairs in the Cabinet, and the sole direction of the House of Lords. Even George Grenville, the new leader of the House of Commons, was not sufficiently consulted, and the situation grew intolerable. In May, 1762, Newcastle resigned. There is nothing to say of this Administration, except that it was completely discordant, particularly on the war issue. We have already seen why Bute resigned.

We may dismiss the Grenville Administration with but a word. Lord Egremont, whose influence among the Tories was very great, and Lord Halifax, a man of popular manners and character, but of no ability or power, were made Secretaries of State, and were intended to share the chief power, but the early death of the first, and the insignificance of the latter left Grenville almost without a rival among the Ministers. Due to this situation, together with his leadership of the House of Commons, it seems reasonable to consider him the nearest approach to a modern Prime Minister since Walpole's time.

Of Lord Rockingham, Grenville's successor as Prime Minister, there is not much to say except that his Cabinet was far from a unit. This was probably partly due to Rockingham himself, about whom Lecky says that when a Ministry represented his personal views, Walpole himself was not more strenuous in enforcing unanimity among its members, but when it diverged from his views, Pelham was not more indulgent of dissent.[1]

1 Lecky, Vol.III, p. 105.

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Rockingham did not cause most of the difficulty. The opposition was powerful as it included Pitt, Grenville, the Bedfords and Temple; but more than that, the Ministry was without its natural strength, as it had to struggle not only against its avowed enemies, but against the insidious hostility of the King and the "King's Friends". They filled the subordinate places in the Govermemnt, plotted incessantly, and voted fearlessly against their chief. In July the Chancellor, Lord Northington, who had persistently thwarted and opposed his colleagues in the Cabinet, openly revolted and informed the King that the Ministry, as it existed, could not go on. The Ministers were dismissed on July 7, 1766, and the King sent for Pitt.[1]

The Cabinet formed by that gentleman must have been completely satisfactory to the Sovereign, as all his friends were comfortably accomodated, and it contained no four persons who had ever in their lives been in the habit of acting together; the office of Paymaster was divided between two men who had never exchanged a word. The failure of this Administration cannot be ascribed to any want of capacity on the part of its members; the fault is entirely in the way the materials were put together. Conciliation was needed, but no Prime Minister was ever less fitted to conciliate opponents or to perform the delicate functions of party management. He still ruled the Cabinet despotically and in three months had so deeply affronted the Duke of Portland, still Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Burborough that they and others retired in disgust. His colleagues were, as they

1 Lecky, Vol. III, p.106.

had been in his earlier Administration, merely his clerks for naval, financial and diplomatic business. These resignations depleted the ranks of the Cabinet to such an extent that Chatham was driven to make overtures to the Bedford party, which failed because they asked for more than he would grant; eventually he was forced to admit them on their own terms.

The most important public question of the Session of 1767 related to the affairs of the East India Company. This problem was a major cause of disagreement among the Ministers. Grafton and Shelburne agreed with Chatham that the question of the East India Company's rights should be decided by Parliament, while Charles Townshend, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, strenuously recommended an amicable arrangement with the Company. Another bone of contention was raised by the taxation of the American colonies. The Bedford group, with the King behind them, were for the maintenance of the taxes, and coercion if necessary, while Chatham, Grafton, Camden and Granby were for repeal. In 1767, before he could work out further plans of foreign policy, Pitt was prostrated by the gout for two years, and was thus practically removed from politics. Grafton was now nominally the chief, but allowed the Cabinet to degenerate into a debating society. The one man who knew his own mind and worked hard was George III. The ascendancy he had established by 1770 was the honestly won triumph of a personality, narrow but sincere, and of a system coherent in principle and method.[1]

1. Robertson, p. 244.

VII. Situation in 1760

Before advancing with Lord North's Administration, it seems advisable to examine the status of the Prime Minister and Cabinet which had been attained by 1760. We choose that date rather than 1770 because at that time George III had not stepped in to meddle with affairs, and Cabinet Government was functioning more normally than it was ten years later. First, it should once more be impressed upon the reader that constitutional development with regard to the extension of Parliament's authority, the extension of the party system, the evolution of the Cabinet and of the Prime Minister, are mostly the logical results of political situations and not of statutory enactment. In other words, this development is not revealed in the records. The Cabinet was established in 1760 in the sense that it was a group of Ministers who decided policy, and were dependent upon Parliamentary support. In selection the Crown was limited by their influence in Parliament, and by their capacity to agree on a common course of action, and their readiness not to pursue political differences to open revolt. The leader of the Government, the Prime Minister, enjoyed a preëminence which varied in proportion to the confidence he could win from the Crown, the quality of his own gifts and character, and his personal and political relations with his colleagues and his party.[1] The title of Prime Minister had come into use by 1760,

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1 Robertson, p. 189.

but was still regarded as invidious by Constitutional purists.[1] By 1760 the office of Prime Minister had reached a unique stage. Before that time his position had been comparatively simple, as he had been responsible to the King alone. It became simple again when there was no direct responsibility to any one save the House of Commons, through which the voice of the people might make itself heard. But the Prime Minister who, in the eighteenth century was obliged to please the King, both Houses of Parliament, and the people at large, all four of whom were likely to be at variance, found it no easy task.[2]

One more comment on this period. Though it was coming more and more to be felt that a prominent member of the Cabinet should be in the House of Commons, it was not thought necessary that any large proportion of Ministers should be there. We constantly find the phrase, "Lords of the Cabinet Council," and there were very few in that Council who were not Lords. In 1740, with the exception of Walpole, Sir Charles Wager was the only Commoner in the Cabinet, and even he was objected to by the King. In the Pelham Cabinet of 1744, Pelham himself was the only member of the Lower House, and he was of a noble family, being the son and brother of peers.

Now we are ready to examine George III's attempt to upset this beautiful theory of Cabinet Government.

1 Hunt, Vol. X, p. 9.
2 Blauveult, p. 216.

B. The Period from 1770 to 1783

I Relation of the King to the Prime Minister

The period we are now to treat was certainly a most critical one for the Cabinet and Prime Minister. It was during these thirteen years that George III attempted to assert his authority to the full, and to literally rule. For a time it appeared that he would succeed. Had the American Revolution been unsuccessful, he might well have realized his purpose, Various developments, however, thwarted him, and by 1783 he found himself in no stronger a position than he had been in when he acceded to the throne in 1760. Let us examine this interesting period.

As we have said, upon Grafton's resignation in 1770, Lord North became First Lord of the Treasury, retaining also the Chancellorship of the Exchequer; George III, of course, is the predominant figure during this period, and it is with him that we are concerned more than with any other one man. As we have observed, he hoped to attain absolutism by the obliteration of party lines; but now, after a ten year struggle to rule as well as reign, he found himself the leader of a party, and as such, virtually the Prime Minister. Robertson says that he would have gained nothing he did not already possess by presiding at Cabinet meetings or by defending Ministerial policy in the House of Lords. The policy, the party,and the management were under Royal control. The correspondence of Lord

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North reveals this.[1] In writing to his Cabinet leader concerning the Royal Marriage Bill in 1772 he said, "I expect every nerve to be strained to carry the Bill....It is not a question that relates to Administration but personally to myself, therefore I have a right to expect a hearty support from ev(er)y one in my Service, and I shall remember Defaulters."[2]

We have already seen that George III's power was due to the corrupt organization of the "King's Friends", and there in no need to go into that phase of the subject any further. It is enough to say the funds spent to secure votes in the Lower House were so great that they staggered even George III himself; as many as one hundred and ninety-two members of the House of Commons held office under the Government. His power was not due solely to bribery, however. There was a steady consolidation of Toryism, in other words, of classes opposed in sentiment to change, rallying to a strong Crown and disgusted at the violence of the opposition. By 1773 George III's political predominance was firmly established and his will was absolute law to his Ministers. The balance of power, which during Walpole's Administration had shifted from the Lords to the House of Commons, was shifting from the Commons to the Crown.[3] As we have said earlier in the essay, George's intentions were of the best, as he wished to do nothing but

1 Robertson, p. 252.
2 "Letters of George III to Lord North", Feb.26, 1772; Brougham, Historical Sketches, Vol.I,p.79.The italics are mine.
3 Hunt, p. 123.

what law and custom, as he interpreted them, entitled him to do. He appreciated more than his Ministers the gravity of the issues; he also recognized that after 1770 his ideals of Government were at stake.

As Lord North was at first the willing instrument through which George III worked, he, as Prime Minister, naturally enjoyed all the power in the House of Commons of which he had need. Until 1778 relations between the Monarch and his Premier ran smoothly enough. The war with the American Colonies was considered to be well in hand and there was not a great deal else to bother the Government. By 1778, however, complexion of matters had changed, and North now realized that the Government was unequal to the situation. Consequently he offered his resignation to the King, and advised that Chatham, who was still in high public favor, be appointed to establish a new Ministry. According to present ideas George should certainly have been guided by the assurance of his First Minister, and allowed his new Cabinet to act as it thought best. Instead, he pleaded with North to stand by him. "However you may now and then despond, yet ... you have too much personal affection for me and sense of honour to allow such a thought to take any hold of y(ou)r mind."[1] North was not put off so easily, and repeatedly in his letters, especially those of 1778, offered his resignation. Another answer from George to Lord North is as follows, "If I will not by your

1 "Letters of George III to Lord North", Jan.31, 1778; Brougham, Historical Sketches, Vol. I, pp.103-104.

[1] "Letters of George III to Lord North", Jan.31, 1778; Brougham, Historical Sketches, Vol. I, pp.103-104.

advice take the step wh. I look on as Disgraceful to myself, and destruction to my Country and Family, are you resolved, agreeable to the Example of the D. of Grafton, at the hour of danger to desert me?"[1] Lord North, when he found he could no longer approve the policy which he was required to pursue, and of course defend, was bound to quit the Councils of his unreasonable Sovereign; but he failed to do so. He most assuredly should have insisted upon his resignation, regardless of any kindly feelings which he may have had toward the King. He could not have rendered a worse service either to the King, or to the people, than he did by failing to resign, for he enabled a monarch to rule in his own person, dictating the demands of his own violence or caprice, through servants who disapproved of his measures.

George III's retention of power after 1778 was pure obstinacy; this is shown by his refusal to offer the Prime Ministership to Pitt. "'Every rank", wrote one of the foremost bankers in London (at that time), "looks up to Chatham with the only gleam of hope that remains."[2] North, Bute, Mansfield, Grenville, and even Rockingham were all in favor of calling in Chatham at this juncture. Alone, among the hostile parties, the King refused to consider him. The main motives that influenced George at this time were personal. "No advantage to my Country nor personal danger to myself can make me address myself to Lord Chatham or to any other branch of

1 "Letters of George III to Lord North", Mar. 22, 1778; Brougham, Historical Sketches, Vol. I, p. 112.

2 Chatham Correspondence, iv, 493-506, 511-512; Lecky, Vol. IV, p. 87.

opposition. Honestly, I would rather lose the Crown I now wear than bear the ignominy of possessing it under their shackles."[1]

The opposition to George III and his policy was steadily becoming stronger. It became their object "to leave no stone unturned that would sweep out of power the men, and destroy before it was too late the system of government and measures, intrinsically pernicious, that infallibly were driving Great Britain to Niagara."[2] Its leaders gradually united, and Chatham's death and the course of events brought Shelburne, Camden, and Grafton into line with Rockingham, Fox, and Richmond; while the popularity of the existing Ministry steadily waned. North was now more anxious than ever to resign, and two or three attempts to reconstruct the Ministry proved of no avail. Shelburne and others were approached, but the King refused their sweeping demands that the existing Ministry be displaced en bloc. If he had been wise he would have accepted their terms without undignified protestations to a "policy which in a few years was forced upon his acceptance ... at the point of the parliamentary bayonet."[3] The disastrous year of 1781 turned public opinion steadily against the Government, as the defeat at Yorktown and the Fall of Minorca were especially disheartening. On March 20,1782, North resigned.

In the last analysis, had North been true

1 "Letters of George III to Lord North", Mar. 15, 1778; Brougham, Historical Sketches, Vol. I, pp. 108,109.
2 Robertson, p. 266.
3 Lewis, Essays on the Administrations of Great Britain from 1783 to 1830, p. 16.

to his convictions, George could not have carried on his system, as he could not have formed another Administration which would have acted on the same principles. His defect was that his loyalty to George III was stronger than his will, industry, or convictions, and that he permitted his judgment to be overruled by the pertinacity and fixed ideas of the King. Lecky sums him up by saying that he carried out with greatly superior abilities a policy not very different from that of Bute.[1] North, by the way, would not consent to being called Prime Minister; he did not consider himself as acting in that capacity, at least so he said.

The power of the Crown had been displayed from 1778 to 1782, and also the will of the King, in the maintenance of the struggle for four years against military failure, maladministration, and a Prime Minister pleading to be relieved of a task he had disliked from the first. It had now become evident, however, that it was only possible to govern by one party and one policy, and the King reluctantly submitted to the inevitable. He accepted Rockingham as North's successor, and the Whig party again rose to power. One reason for the failure of the King's system was that it deprived him of the best minds and characters at his disposal, for the best minds refused to surrender their intellectual independence to an inferior dictator. They either rebelled or were driven into the Opposition.[2] Thus was the King vanquished.

1 Lecky, Vol. III, p. 138.
2 Robertson, p. 254.

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2 Robertson, p. 284.

Rockingham's terms on coming into office were that he might make peace with the American Colonies on the basis of their independence, and also that he might bring forward measures for the abolition of offices, the exclusion of contracts from Parliament, and the disfranchisement of revenue offices; measures which must tend toward a reduction of the influence of the Crown. The King was in great distress, naturally, but there was no escape. Shelburne in turn had refused to form a new Administration, and Rockingham, therefore, became Prime Minister for the second time. But though George III had given Rockingham office, he refused to give him his confidence and good-will; from the first he was waiting for the chance to profit by every false step and every difference which might arise in the new Cabinet. Rockingham died on July 1st, 1782, and so did not have to contend with His Majesty very long.

With the death of Rockingham the Crown devolved upon the King of England, as the party who wished to restrain Royal power was leaderless. The Duke of Richmond had potential qualities, but was unpopular and hated by the King. Fox was another enemy of George; Burke was not even in the Cabinet. So the Sovereign at once summoned Lord Shelburne to be First Lord of the Treasury, which caused Fox and several other members of the Rockingham group to resign. Shelburne's political theories were somewhat like those of Chatham, as he desired to stand aloof from party organizations, and without abandoning to any extent any political principle, to employ

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them for his own ends. He was incapable of such a policy, however, because he had neither the commanding genius, nor the necessary popularity (he was almost as unpopular as Chatham had been popular), and he lacked real skill in the management of men. Shelburne was not apt to be a mere puppet to the King, who appears to have supported him solely through his detestation of Fox. He was forced out of office on February 24, 1783 by the Fox-North coalition, after a Ministry of no further significance to us.

The situation in the House of Commons on February 14, 1783 was as follows; one hundred and forty followers of Shelburne, one hundred and twenty of North, and ninety of Fox. Naturally, when the last two factions united, the former had to give way. The combination was declared to have been formed on the basis of "mutual good will and confidence," which naturally sounded like poppycock, more or less, to the ears of the multitude, because the two leaders involved had been fighting intermittently for years. The coalition was not wholly incongruous, as neither of the men was apt to be bound too much by political scruples, though they were frequently at odds on political issues, and at no time had they been divided by any serious personal dislike. The arrangement was not unlike that of Pitt and Newcastle(1757-1762), and the memories of that highly successful union probably lessened the hostility of the nation to Fox and North; still neither the private nor the public life of Fox was of the type to completely

win the confidence of the English nation. The avowed purpose of their efforts was to curtail the power of George III. When Fox insisted that the King should not be allowed to be his own Prime Minister, Lord North, who had done more than any other one man to build up personal Royal Government, replied, "The King ought to be treated with every sort of respect and attention, but the appearance of power is all that a King of this country can have."[1] In Fox's words, they wished"to give a good, stout blow to the Crown." North's reasons for joining the coalition are rather a puzzle as he had a little while before been only too glad to get out of office. Perhaps he felt that some coalition was inevitable, and that Fox and Pitt might form one which would force him entirely out of the Ministry. Or perhaps he wished an opportunity to retrieve his reputation; he had not had a chance to act on his own judgment when he was Prime Minister before, and he may have felt that he would like a real opportunity. Nevertheless, the whole business was an unpardonable blunder, as no one had condemned North with more vehemence than had Fox only a short while before. It certainly seemed to proclaim the determination of two unscrupulous opponents to seal an artificial union by office obtained by any methods at any price.

The King, heartily opposed to the prospect of the new Government, tried in vain for six weeks to prevent its formation. He had no love for Shelburne, but he detested Fox,

1 Fox,Correspondence,Vol.II,pp.37-38, quoted by Blauveult,p.277.

win the confidence of the English nation. The avowed purpose of their efforts was to curtail the power of George III. When Fox insisted that the King should not be allowed to be his own Prime Minister, Lord North, who had done more than any other one man to build up personal Royal Government, replied, "The King ought to be treated with every sort of respect and attention, but the appearance of power is all that a King of this country can have."[1] In Fox's words, they wished "to give a good, stout blow to the Crown." North's reasons for joining the coalition are rather a puzzle as he had a little while before been only too glad to get out of office. Perhaps he felt that some coalition was inevitable, and that Fox and Pitt might form one which would force him entirely out of the Ministry. Or perhaps he wished an opportunity to retrieve his reputation; he had not had a chance to act on his own judgment when he was Prime Minister before, and he may have felt that he would like a real opportunity. Nevertheless, the whole business was an unpardonable blunder, as no one had condemned North with more vehemence than had Fox only a short while before. It certainly seemed to proclaim the determination of two unscrupulous opponents to seal an artificial union by office obtained by any methods at any price.

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and now had no use for North because of his "desertion" in 1782. He offered the Treasury to the younger Pitt, who with admirable discernment saw that his time had not yet come, and refused it. Pitt said that nothing less than a moral certainty of a majority in the House of Commons could make him undertake the task.

There is at least one feature of this coalition, as it was carried on, which would make it absolutely impossible today; that was its division on certain issues, among them that proposed by Pitt for Parliamentary reform. Pitt described the secret influence as "sapping the very foundation of liberty by corruption," and he attributed all the disasters of the American War to the servility of Parliament. Fox strongly supported the Resolution; while North opposed it; North of course had to support his own war policy. The Resolution was rejected by 293 to 149, which is only incidental to the fact that even the "broadest-bottomed"of Cabinets could not exist in our day with such diversity of opinion among its leaders.

This Administration finally fell because of the hostility of the Sovereign. He had always treated its Ministers with cold civility, would make no peers, would give no assistance, and thought only of the time when he could get rid of them; in short, he was profoundly unhappy. Finally his chance came when the Government brought in a Bill which was to take India out of the hands of the East India Company and turn it over to a board of seven commissioners, to be named

for the first time by Parliament, and afterward by the Crown. There was no doubt but that the measure was framed in good faith, and that it was necessary for humanity, and for the honor of the country. Regrettable as it was, George III, Pitt, and the East India Company did not apparently wish to consider the Bill on its merits; Fox, not the imperial problem, was made the issue. The Bill passed the House of Commons by a large majority, and was on the point of passing the Lords when Lord Temple crept to the Royal ear and received the message from the King that anyone in the Lords voting for Fox's Bill "would be considered as a personal enemy to the Crown;" the result was that it was thrown out of the Upper House by nineteen votes. The next day the Ministers were dismissed, and William Pitt, at the age of twenty-four, accepted the invitation to form a Ministry and defy the Opposition. There is no doubt but that a Sovereign who says he will consider anyone his enemy who votes for a measure which he has allowed his Ministers to introduce without a word of disapproval, is acting in a manner that is both grossly unconstitutional and grossly treacherous.[1] The success of the Royal action leads us to believe that the power of the Crown was not yet completely extinct; the maintenance of Pitt in office by the support of the Sovereign, without a Parliamentary majority, strengthens that belief.

1 Lecky, Vol. IV, p. 330

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1 Lecky, Vol. IV, p. 830

II. Cabinet Unity - Supremacy of the Prime Minister. 1770 - 1783

When North came into power in 1770 there were few changes in the Cabinet; also it contained no men of any eminence excepting himself. As there is not much that we have not already covered from this point of view, we will not devote much space to this section of the essay. If we examine the correspondence between Lord North and the King, we fully realize how completely the King assumed the position of Prime Minister, superintending, directing, and prescribing in all its parts the policy of the Government. The details of military management, the whole course and character of the war, and sometimes even the manner in which Government questions were to be argued in Parliament, were controlled by him.[1] The Ministers were now simply the executive instruments selected by the Sovereign to carry out his policy as the forms of law and custom required; the Ministers, in other words, were merely the servants of the Crown. Lord Barrington, the Minister of War, is a good example of this. Though he was supposed to be directly responsible for the manner in which the war was conducted, as early as 1774 he informed his colleagues that he disapproved of the whole policy of coercing the Colonies, and that he believed the military tactics and enterprises which he organized could lead to nothing but disaster. In spite of these opinions, he consented at the

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1 Leahy, Vol. IV, p. 76.

request of the King to remain the responsible Minister until the end of 1778; meanwhile he obediently carried out the war policy of George III. Such a situation did, however, lead to concerted action by the Cabinet, even if this action was in the wrong direction, and there was no serious Cabinet dissension until 1779.

As Lord North was personally subservient to the King, with this state of affairs he naturally had a greater ascendancy in his own Cabinet than most of his predecessors. Nevertheless, we will recall that he steadily repudiated the title of Prime Minister.

Rockingham's administration was unique in that when it took over the Government in 1782 it marked the first time that there was a complete change in the Cabinet; it was almost complete, at any rate, because the Chancellor was the only Minister to retain his office. The precedent which was set at that time has been pretty closely followed ever since. If any members of the outgoing Cabinet remain in office, it is by special arrangement with the new Premier. Though all the Ministers were new and, with one exception, of the Whig party, they were divided into two factions; half of them were followers of Rockingham, while the rest were adherents of Shelburne. The odd man was Thurlow, a trusted friend of the King, of whom we shall hear more in connection with William Pitt; he was the Chancellor in this Cabinet.

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Administration, and resorted to his tactics of stirring up dissension among its ministers; in this he was aided materially by Thurlow, who was openly opposed to his Chief. Shelburne did not help to solidify matters as he made it his main object to disjoint and pulverize parties, and to govern men chosen from the most various connections. The only way the coalition hung together at all until Rockingham's death was by the efforts of the Prime Minister himself. He and Burke, who was in the Ministry but not in the Cabinet, sought to maintain unity and homogeneity in the Government that it might dictate its policy to the King, and also elaborate carefully the organization of parties. Rockingham did have a particular ability in the matter of drawing men together in closer harmony. He aimed to convert party connection and personal friendship, which others had rendered subservient only to temporary views and the purpose of ambition, "into a lasting depository of his principles."[1] He alone could keep the Whig party together, and his death brought divisions in the Cabinet to a head.

When the new Administration was in the process of formation, Fox correctly pointed out that it looked as if it would consist of two parts, "one belonging to the King, and the other to the public." Consequently, Fox declined to serve in the new Ministry. His decision was sound as he had no confidence in the armies, policy, and sincerity of the new Premier, a title, by the way, which Shelburne repudiated. It

1 Keppel, Memoirs of the Marquis of Rockingham and his Contemporaries, Vol.II,p.487. Referred to hereafter as Keppel.

surely was his duty to refuse to serve under a leader whom he thoroughly distrusted. Many of Fox's friends, among them the Duke of Portland, Lord John Cavendish, Burke and Grafton, retired with the leader of their group upon the death of Rockingham. The personality and methods of Shelburne himself did much to add to the difficulties of the Cabinet. He was artificial, overstrained, and affectedly obsequious and reserved in his dealings with his colleagues. Because he did not communicate the ends of his own which he pursued, his Ministers constantly suspected him of duplicity, and complained of his failure to consult them. Everybody quarrelled with the Premier but young William Pitt, and he later said that he had atoned for any errors he might have committed by having served almost a year under Lord Shelburne. All in all we gather that this Cabinet was not exactly a unit. We have already seen how it was forced out by the Fox-North coalition in 1783. It is enough to say of this coalition that it was hampered by surprisingly little friction. Perhaps they were not in office long enough for any real issue to divide them to a great extent.

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C. 1783-1803

Effect of the Character of the Prime Minister on the Office

As we have only one Administration to deal with in this period, it seems advantageous to subdivide it more minutely for the sake of clarity; hence the reader will here find the sections standing by themselves which in the two previous periods would have been included in other, more comprehensive topics.

From 1783 until the end of the century we shall follow the Cabinet policy of the younger William Pitt. It was he who gathered up the loose ends of the Government which had been left hanging when the Fox-North coalition was dismissed, and who finally reëstablished the Prime Minister as a permanent institution. In many ways his Administration was insignificant, but in this respect it was far reaching.

We will remember that William Pitt came into office after the Fox-North coalition was defeated on the East India Bill; he was not yet twenty-five years of age. When he died in 1806 he had been at the head of the Government for a longer period than any other statesman except Walpole; no political figure of the first rank, before or since his day, has spent so brief a political period of his life out of office. He inherited from his father the gift of oratory and confidence in his ability to lead; too, he was a great financier. As a leader of party and as a Parliamentary master of the eighteenth

century he is equalled, but not surpassed, by Walpole alone. On the other hand, there is probably much truth in what Lecky says of him, that his solid ability bore no kind of proportion to his oratorical skill.[1] By his power of debate accompanied by great decision of character, by the favour of the King, an illustrious name, and a great national power he maintained an authority immensely greater than his deserts.[2] He had unlimited ambition and a love of power not exceeded by Walpole, but his motives were impeccable, even if we quarrel with his conclusions. He dominated Parliament, the Crown, the country, and his Cabinet by that sheer force of character which placed him in a lonely class by himself on the Treasury Branch. Under him the office of Prime Minister regained the prestige that had been imparted to it by Walpole, and it became established by the end of the century as a permanent and unique feature of the English Government. This writer cannot but conclude that the development of the office was largely due to the dominant personalities of Walpole and the younger Pitt.

1 Lecky, Vol.I, p. 392.
2 Robertson, p. 308.

II. Relations of the King to Prime Minister

1783 - 1803

Pitt ultimately was supreme over George III, but he first came into power and maintained office solely on the strength of support from his Sovereign. This is shown by the fact that although resolutions under Fox's leadership were passed in the House of Commons which were hostile to the Ministry, he was not forced to give up office. Of course this could not keep up indefinitely, but until he was able to secure a majority in the Lower House he was dependent upon Royal support. This support was given largely through the instrument of the House of Lords. The King, who had refused to create a single peer during the Coalition Government now publicly marked his sentiments by creating four on the recommendation of his new Prime Minister. By 1801, in spite of the fact that George III had scruples against increasing the peerage, Pitt had created no less than 140 peers; they were not for merit of any kind, but in most cases purely for political support. This activity was called "recruiting the peerage." This policy of the King, that is maintaining Pitt in power, needs no defense, because it was endorsed by the declaration of the national will; incidentally, ~~he~~ the King gained a hold on the affection of the people such as he had never had before.

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content to be guided by the Royal will, but desired to use the force and resources of the Crown to carry out his own policy. George freed himself from the danger of Whig domination, but he did so at the cost of resigning his hopes of establishing a personal system of Government. He never liked Pitt, but knew that Pitt stood between him and Fox; so for seventeen years he was content that he should retain office.

There now arose a question as to who should appoint the Ministers. Pitt's attitude on this problem is not exactly what we would expect in a real Prime Minister. He questioned the right of the House of Commons to express a general want of confidence in the Minister without specifying distinct charges, and maintained that the House of Commons in condemning the Minister just appointed by the Crown (1784), before waiting for these measures, was violating the prerogative of the Sovereign to choose his Minister. Pitt said that if the King could appoint his Minister the executive power would be transplanted to the House of Commons. Where is the safety of any one prerogative of the Crown, or even of the Crown itself, if its prerogative of naming Ministers is usurped by the House of Commons, or if its nomination of them is to be negatived by us without stating any one ground of distrust in the man?[1] It is now generally admitted that Pitt's view was false and dangerous; that the Lower House has a perfect right to withhold its confidence from Ministers because of the manner in which

1 Lecky, Vol. IV, pp. 328,329.

they have been appointed. Pitt's view may possibly be explained by the fact that he made the above statement at a time when he was still under considerable obligation to the King. At any rate, during the later years of the reign of George III, the rule became fixed in making up a new Ministry that the King should simply receive and endorse the list of nominees prepared and presented by the Premier.

The General Election of 1784, by which Pitt, as we shall presently see, at last gained a majority in the House of Commons, was more a victory of the people than of the King. It was generally thought that the King would be supreme, but this did not prove to be the case. George could not overthrow Pitt because he was the only possible Minister, and as a result Ministerial power was now consolidated; the Minister and not the King became the true and habitual centre of authority. With this turn of affairs, the King's Friends were reduced to submission, and eventually disappeared, because there was no more need of them; the Departmental system was dead as far as England was concerned.

Generally speaking, Pitt sought to reconcile the Crown's prerogative with the functions of Parliament, but his attitude toward the King was marked by a proud independence, which often caused annoyance.[1] He brought

1 Rose, The Life of William Pitt, Part I, p. 175.
Referred to hereafter as Rose.

forward measures of which the King disapproved, and in all important matters he had his way until the Spring of 1801, when George demurred on conscientious grounds. The note of affectionate intimacy which marked the Royal intercourse with North and Addington (1803) was absent, but its place was taken by a growing confidence upon the part of George for his Prime Minister, which gradually deepened into genuine admiration. Although Pitt insisted upon having the controlling voice in matters of importance, by reason of his early dependence upon the Crown he naturally leaned toward prerogative and Tory principles of Government. So if George III was no longer his own Minister he had the satisfaction of seeing his own principles carried out by hands far abler than his own.[1]

Pitt, then, did not attempt to reduce the Crown to a cipher, and George was allowed to exercise a strong and legitimate influence on politics as an adviser of the Cabinet. Another way of looking at the relationship between the Crown and Pitt is suggested by Rose. George III showed marked ability in the support of corporate interests and the management of men, so that his relations to Pitt were not unlike those of the Duke of Newcastle to Chatham. The Pitts supplied the brain power, while the Monarch or the Duke, by the award of favors, ensured the needful degree of subservience at the polls, or in the

1 May, The Constitutional History of England Since the Accession of George III, Vol. 1, p. 82.

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lobbies of St. Stephens.[1] From the foregoing points and analogies it is clear that we are still a long way from the Cabinet of the nineteenth century and its conventions and customs with regard to the place and functions of a Constitutional Crown; in other words, the King in 1784 still retains an astonishing amount of power, if we compare him with the Sovereign of today.

We now come to an event which is of particular importance in the relations of Pitt to his Sovereign, as it was the cause of his resignation in 1801; we refer to the Irish question. The rebellion of 1798 in Ireland convinced Pitt as he had thought from 1785, that a legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland was inevitable. Also he wished Roman Catholic emancipation, the commutation of the tithe, ~~and~~ the provision of endowment for the Catholic Priesthood and Dissenters, and free trade between the two countries. The provision which he proposed of the most significance to us, however, was that there should be a political, instead of a sacramental test for office, by which Roman Catholics would be able to enter the Legislature and hold offices at present locked against them by "the symbols of atoning grace."[2] In other words, in place of the Oath of Supremacy and Abjuration, he desired to impose on members of Parliament and other officials merely the Oath of Allegiance, which would be no bar

1 Rose, Part II, pp. 561,562.
2 Robertson, p. 404.

to Roman Catholics. He got the Act of Union through the English Houses without much trouble in 1799, and through the Irish Legislature by wholesale bribery. Pitt had reason to believe that the King would not oppose him on the Catholic question, because Ireland had of late been fairly peaceful; furthermore, the position of England was at that time desperate as Russia was ready to attack her upon a moment's notice, and France was now reunited; also there was discontent at home. Naturally George would not relish a change in Government at such a crisis.

The Union safely accomplished, Pitt in September of 1800 brought the Catholic question formally before his colleagues. Now the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loughborough, for the first time struck a discordant note, objecting to any favour being granted to the Catholics except a commutation of tithes. George III was sincerely religious in his own narrow way and he believed that if he assented to Roman Catholic relief it would be a direct violation of the Coronation Oath, by which he was supposed to be the protector of the Established Church. Loughborough, aware of this conviction of the King, betrayed to him the message of the Prime Minister, which had been delivered to the Cabinet in the strictest confidence. His secret counsels may not have had a profound effect upon George, because a collision between Pitt and the King on this topic was certainly inevitable; without doubt, however, it put an edge on the King's resolve to make the matter an issue. At any rate the Sovereign now termed the measure the most

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Jacobinical thing he had ever heard of, and declared that he would make any man who proposed such a measure his personal enemy. This statement had a profound effect upon the Cabinet, as the Duke of Portland, Lord Liverpool, and even Lord Chatham, the brother of Pitt, now swayed toward the opposition, and left Pitt in a far less powerful position than he might have enjoyed with a united Cabinet. Upon the reiteration of this stand taken by the King, the Cabinet now definitely went over to him, and Pitt could only tender his resignation, which had been requested.

Pitt has been charged with playing a selfishly criminal game in resigning, with the evident intent of showing his own strength and being called back into office on his own terms. This is absurd; according to Grenville: "There was no alternative except that of taking this step ... or of agreeing to the dereliction of one's opinion on one of the most important questions in the whole range of our domestic policy."[1] The writer is inclined to agree with him. There are, as a matter of fact, other opinions as to why Pitt resigned. Because of the nature of the promises made to the Catholics, he deemed himself bound to carry them out or to resign if he could not. The cause with which we are most concerned is Pitt's reason for resigning. He saw it his honour and duty, as well as that of his colleagues, to decline to continue in

1 Rose, Part II, pp.445,446.

office when they were not allowed to propose with the authority of the Government a measure which they considered the proper sequel of the Union.

The Irish question proves that the King, even in 1801, was far from being a nonentity in the Government. He gained a further triumph after the resignation of Pitt, when, during an attack of lunacy he succeeded in exacting a promise from Pitt never to agitate the question of Catholic Emancipation during the remainder of his reign. No incident in the life of Pitt is more unfortunate than this. It is said that he yielded because he was overcome by emotion at the mental agitation of the Monarch; this is not consistent with any of his former relations with the King, which had always been cold and formal. The real reason probably is that he was at almost all times, as we shall see, prepared to give up measures for the sake of power. Once again then did George III defeat the policy of his Ministers and drive them from office. He enjoyed a five-fold triumph without concessions that hurt his principles; he got the Union; he drove Pitt, when he resisted, from office; he exacted a pledge from the two leading statesmen of the day;[1] he outlived both Pitt and Fox; and he did not go permanently mad until he had inoculated his son and successor with his own bigotry.

1 Fox also agreed not to raise the question of Catholic Emancipation.

It seems certain that Pitt might well have defeated the King on this issue. Lord Malmesbury said, "If Pitt had been provident enough to prepare the King's mind gradually, and to prove to him that the test proposed was as binding as the present oath, no difficulty could have arisen." Or if, as Pitt had desired, no communication had been made to the King until the Catholic Emancipation, with its accompanying details, could have been presented to George III as the unanimous and deliberate policy of his Cabinet, there is little doubt that he must have yielded. It was utterly impossible in the existing state of England, of the Continent, and of Parliament, that any Ministry could have subsisted to which he was seriously opposed. If he had persevered, he must have triumphed and the King must have submitted.[1] At any rate it was Pitt's plain duty to persevere. The political importance of his decision was tremendous, as the success of the Union and the future loyalty of the Catholics of Ireland depended mainly upon his conduct.

A new Ministry was formed by the Speaker, Henry Addington, who was thoroughly congenial to the King; but it was admittedly weak in personnel and experience. At length, public opinion insisted that the war required the immediate return of Pitt to the Prime Ministership. Upon the recovery of the King from a brief mental collapse, Parliamentary attack

1 Lecky, Vol. VIII, p. 512.

pressed and the Government majority sank rapidly. Finally Addington resigned and Pitt was somewhat reluctantly invited by the King to form a new Ministry. This Administration is of no importance to us except to reveal that the King still had a say in who should be admitted to the Cabinet. Pitt urged the formation of a united Ministry which would include both Fox and Grenville; George accepted the latter, but drew the line on Fox. The Cabinet, therefore, had to be patched up out of the Addington group, as Grenville would not serve without Fox, and the remnants of Pitt's party. It was a weak Cabinet, due solely to the obstinacy of George III. Pitt was not the Pitt of 1793 and he died in eighteen months, broken in health.

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III. Prime Minister's Relation to House of Commons

1783 - 1800

When Pitt came to power in 1783, the opposition commanded so large a majority in the House of Commons that it was generally supposed that the first action of the Ministers would be to dissolve Parliament and call for a new election. At any rate, if the Ministry did not choose to have a new election, it was surely the place of the opposition to do so. Fox should have placed on record, as its leader, the solemn protest of the House at the dangerous and unconstitutional action of the Crown, and then have given the new Prime Minister a fair chance; Fox could then, if the expected dissolution were not forthcoming, have proved that Pitt cared more for principles than for office. But instead of that logical policy, he showed that dissolution was the one thing he feared, and a return to office the one thing he desired. He forgot that the final verdict lay not with the Commons, nor with the Crown, but with the electors and public opinion.[1] Fox's reason for not seeking a dissolution was that a measure of transcendent importance, which was supported by the great majority of the House of Commons, had been suddenly arrested by a "grossly unconstitutional interference of the sovereign",[2] and there was, therefore, no adequate reason for appealing to the Constituencies.

1 Robertson, p. 303.
2 Lecky, Vol. IV, p. 320.

III. Prime Minister's Relation to House of Commons

1783 - 1900

It was entirely without precedent for the King to keep his Ministers in office in defiance of the repeated Resolutions which were now made by the Lower House. It would seem that there was absolutely no Constitutional basis for Pitt's retention of power now, except that the coalition had been defeated on that one bill, concerning the East India Company. The Coalition Ministers still commanded an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons. The Bill had been defeated in the Upper House, where there was a large section subservient to the King, and as the deciding vote was only 95 to 76, it seems reasonable to suppose that with the King's assistance the Bill might have been easily passed in that Chamber. The only thing which prevented the policy of the Government from doing itself any harm was the attitude of the opposition, as described by Fox. Rose justifies Pitt's retention of the Prime Ministership by saying that the prerogatives of Parliament are subservient to the interests of the nation, and when the majority of the House of Commons acts in a way strongly reprobated by public opinion, its authority undergoes an immediate eclipse.[1] This does not, however, justify in any way Pitt's failure to call a new election, if we consider the question solely upon Constitutional grounds, because it was the duty of Pitt, if he thought the Lower House was not truly representative, to call for an election that would make it such. Pitt's own reason for his action, or lack of action, is interesting."The immediate

1 Rose, Part I, p. 150.

appointment or removal of ministers does not rest with this House. There is, therefore, nothing illegal in a minister's remaining in office after this House has declared against him, particularly when immediate resignation would have injured the country."[1] Pitt later modified this statement considerably by saying that no Ministry, which did not posess the confidence of the House of Commons, could last.

Pitt, cognizant of the fact that he could not remain in office indefinitely upon this unstable foundation, determined to do battle in the Lower House in the hope that he would overcome the majority, discredit his enemies, and win the confidence of the country before he appealed to it. This was surely a unique method of procedure, if we compare it to the accepted customs of today, but it seems justified, on the whole, and at any rate proved highly successful. Pitt broadened the issue at stake into one which raised the rights and place of the Crown in Government. He claimed to be the champion of a sane Toryism against a coalition of renegade Whigs under North, and factious Radicals under Fox. The hostile majority gradually melted away, and the election of March 1784 developed into a rout for Pitt. The people voted not for the King's system as he understood it, but for Pitt against Fox, and also for what they thought were Pitt's principles, and the use he would make of supremacy.[2] Incidentally, all that made the Crown worth wearing was at

1 Lecky, Vol.IV, p. 328.
2 Robertson, p. 303.

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1 Lecky, Vol.IV, p. 225.
2 Robertson, p. 203.

stake for George III. If Fox's party had obtained a majority at the national election, George for the rest of his life would have become a mere puppet in their hands. He won the game, but he did not win all that he had hoped for.

The majority Pitt secured in the election of 1784, in spite of the defects and limitations of the franchise, proved conclusively that Pitt's power rested on the will of the nation, as had his father's in 1756.[1] He was popular for many reasons; he was looked upon by the Tories as the favored Minister of the King and the Defender of prerogative; to the Whigs he was the champion of reform; his private character was stainless; he had no connection with the American War; and he was the son of the great Chatham. He continued as the Minister of the people until 1790; but although in that year the General Election increased his already large majority, his popularity soon began to wane because of his high-handed policy at home. In 1794 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and in 1795 the Treasonable Practices Act was passed. The result of this was that for the rest of his Administration Pitt had to govern as the King's Minister and not as the Minister of the people.

As we have intimated above, Pitt loved power so much that he gave up principles on more than one occasion rather than relinquish that power. The first indication we have of this is the Parliamentary Reform Bill of 1785, by which Pitt had hoped to reform the rotten boroughs, extend the

1 See p. 114A

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1 See p. 1164

1 This statement must be discounted to a large extent. Robertson, in the Appendix to England under the Hanoverians, says that the General Election of 1784 was exceedingly corrupt. With this in mind, it is evident that Pitt was not elected any more by the people than were any of the previous Prime Ministers.

franchise, and compensate the extinguised vested interests with public money. Although the King finally granted him permission to have the Bill discussed in the House of Commons, that Body refused by a vote of 284 to 174 to grant it a second reading. Pitt had promised the King he would not resign if the Bill were rejected unless those connected with the Government voted against it; thus he gave up his ideal, while his authority was in no way affected.

Another reform which the Prime Minister wished to put through was the abolition of the slave trade in 1788. He abandoned this, as he had the earlier Bill, when he found that a divided majority in both the Cabinet and the House of Lords, a wavering majority in the House of Commons, and the King were unchangeably opposed to immediate abolition.

The occasion which most clearly brings out Pitt's tenacity of office was the war with France in 1792, which upon the death of Louis XVI was seen to be inevitable; it was demanded in unison by the voices of the Court, aristocracy and populace. The Prime Minister had always been unalterably opposed to war, and without doubt felt that he was doing wrong in plunging the country into one, the ruinous consequences of which he clearly foresaw. At any rate he did not resign his office. It may be said, as it was of Walpole, that he felt he could handle the situation better than any one else, in spite of the fact that he did not believe in it. Brougham, Smith and Lecky, however, to cite a few, deemed his policy on this occasion

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as being at least as bad as that of Lord North, because he attempted to guide the destinies of a warring nation, though he disapproved of that war.

Our conclusions are, then, that the abandonment of Parliamentary Reform, of the Slave Trade proposition, of the Catholic Emancipation, and the carrying on of a war to which he was opposed, show in impressive fashion Pitt's love of power. They are ideas abandoned at the first sign of difficulty or unpopularity, and deliberately aacrificed whenever they appeared likely to weaken or embarass the Ministry. The fact that Pitt was able to maintain office in spite of these setbacks also is conclusive evidence that the doctrine of Ministerial responsibility, whether collective or personal, had not been definitely established. In fairness to Pitt, it should be brought out that the chief work of the Cabinet of the eighteenth century was to govern, and not to pass new laws. Far on in the next century the main business of a Cabinet came to be the proposing and carrying through of new measures, but this idea had not firmly taken root, surely, in Pitt's day.[1] This would help to justify his giving up of legislation, but it only serves to further condemn him for staying in office after 1792. At any rate, connection and influence had not yet wholly given way to a system of parties founded on general agreement on political questions, and Ministerial responsibility to Parliament had not yet been firmly established.

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IV. Prime Minister and Party

1783 - 1800

There is not a great deal to say about Pitt's relation to party, but neither can we ignore this topic altogether. His first ten years have often been called his Whig period, which precedes his desertion from Liberalism, or his conversion to a reactionary Toryism in 1793. It was really not a desertion but an intelligible evolution. His premiership emphasizes a double departure; the recreation of the Tory party, and the slow evolution of a new Whiggism, through puzzling and halting phases into modern Liberalism. His policy, then, firmly brought out the two party system, as it set the battle array between himself and the opposition on strict and definable party lines, not because he had stolen their measures, but because both his principles and objects, if successfully realized, involved the defeat of Whiggism.[1]

Although Pitt had this effect upon party, he did not as Prime Minister, lead a party of his own in Parliament until 1792. In 1788 those who recognized him as their leader in the House of Commons numbered only 52, while Fox's party, the regular opposition, was estimated at 138. The "Crown Party", which might be reckoned upon to uphold the Government for the time being under any Minister not particularly unpopular, consisted of 185. We do not mean that these were

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"King's Friends" in any sense of the term, but that they were an independent party who deserted Pitt on occasion, as we have seen;[1] in other words, Pitt had yet to bind his party together. The majority voted every man as he had a mind. His power did not rest on a solid political phalanx, but would continue only so long as he fitly interpreted national feeling. This, does it not, begins to approach the modern position of the Prime Minister with regard to party, despite the fact that Pitt was the head of no exact party.

Pitt realized the instability of his party support, and to offset it, attempted to form a working alliance with the old Whigs; negotiations were begun in May 1792. The King freely admitted that the "National Aristocracy" of the country must have its due weight and power, but when he found that the Coalition Cabinet was to include his hated enemy, Fox, he refused to consider the matter further. Later in 1792, Pitt, according to May, had all the support he wished, at least among the conservative element. Never before had a Minister been so absolute since England became a Constitutional State, governed by the instrumentality of parties; the clergy, since the Revolutions abroad threatened religion, were with the Government; the laws and institutions of the country were believed to be in danger, so the lawyers pressed forward to the support of Pitt; property and public credit were menaced, so he was backed by the capitalists and the proprietors

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of the soil.[1] In other words, the elements which made up the Tory party now recognized Pitt as the leader of that party for the first time. Now he was Prime Minister in the sense that he led the controlling party in the House of Commons. By 1794 he commanded such an overwhelming majority that the opposition could not even amend, much less reject, a single method or measure upon which the Government insisted.

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V. Cabinet Unity - Supremacy of the Prime Minister 1783 - 1800

Pitt's Ministry of 1783 was scarcely less a coalition than the preceding one which he had overthrown and covered with opprobrium for their supposed sacrifice of principle and inconsistency. He had himself contended with Lord North, yet his Government was composed of friends and associates of that Minister, and of Whigs who had recently agreed with North and Fox. The reason for such a broad coalition was the weakness of the party of the Prime Minister; the Cabinet must embrace as many factions of the House of Commons as possible, to enable it to control a majority by a sort of bloc.

Pitt for seventeen years was an even more absolute Prime Minister than Walpole had been, maintaining supreme control over his colleagues. He did permit to a culpable extent open questions among the men in office, but he was too strong a chief to tolerate the old system of a divided Cabinet. He was always as reserved with his colleagues as he was with the King. As Robertson says, he was like a power living apart in an austere atmosphere of his own; his personality was something to be felt. Like Walpole, he showed very little disposition to ally himself with any of those shining lights which might imperil his ascendancy, but sought rather to surround himself with men of sound judgment and great business capacity who could never rise into competition

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with him.[1] From these men, who were not comparable to him in ability, he exacted obedience, not counsel; in this he was reminiscent of his father. His commanding temper, moreover, would never have brooked the superior airs of Temple and Shelburne, which Chatham was compelled to endure. Due to the mediocrity of his colleagues he could, from the outset, carry out his plan of moulding the Cabinet to his will.

His only stumbling block in the Cabinet was Thurlow. Lord Thrulow was the Chancellor in Pitt's Cabinet, and was a particular friend of the King; his dismissal in 1792 is simply a concrete example of what we have been saying concerning Pitt's authority in the Cabinet. This man was often an effective leader of the opposition in the Cabinet, but Pitt had to put up with him for some time because of his power in the House of Lords. He has been described as a man with the Roman Conquest in his eyebrow, and the Feudal System in every feature of his face. Rose says of him that at least the boom of his voice was worth something to an otherwise weak Ministry.[2] In spite of this undeniable asset, Pitt found him a colleague wholly fruitful in Council, and one always apt to raise difficulties; this last characteristic led to his being termed "that enemy of all human action."

Thurlow hoped to retain in the Ministry of Pitt the position of the King's confidential Minister which he had previously held. A mischievous tradition had of late years been

1 Lecky, Vol. V, p. 24.
2 Rose, Part. I, p. 151.

arising that the Chancellor, though a member of the Cabinet and entrusted with Cabinet secrets, had a right to pursue in politics an independent, and even a hostile course. In accordance with this tradition, when Pitt instituted a system for the reduction of the Debt by providing that every new loan should carry a sinking fund of its own, Thurlow poured ridicule upon it in the House of Lords, and spoke of its author with contempt. He also, at this time, opposed in the House of Lords, Fox's Libel Bill, which had been supported by Pitt. The latter, who had borne long enough Thurlow's swollen temper and constant opposition, now told the King plainly that he must choose between him and the Chancellor. George unhesitatingly demanded Thurlow's resignation, and that gentleman retired at the end of the session, Lord Loughborough taking his place. Pitt's ascendancy in the Cabinet was now placed beyond dispute. The dismissal of Thurlow marks a step forward in the development of the Cabinet System; it was now no longer possible, as it had been in the earlier years of the reign, for a Minister to remain in office, through the King's favour, against the will of the Prime Minister. When a Prime Minister is dissatisfied with one of his colleagues he may insist upon his resignation, for if he requests the dismissal, his request cannot be rejected unless the Sovereign is prepared to form a new Ministry. Thus the authority of the Prime Minister became more clearly defined; his supremacy in the Cabinet, and the principles of collective agreement on fundamental political issues ~~was~~ were enforced by this

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VI. Pitt's Contribution to the Office of Prime Minister

1783 - 1800

Pitt is considered a great English statesman and Prime Minister, but there is no gainsaying the fact that he did not contribute much in the way of constructive legislation to Great Britain's Government. He died in the bitter knowledge that popular liberties had been suspended (as a result of his stern war measures), that the National Debt had been more than doubled, taxation strained to the breaking point, a quarter of a million human lives sacrificed, and that peace and reform were further out of sight than ever.[1] With his great power, except for the Union of Ireland, which was more or less forced upon him by a rebellion, he did not leave a single measure behind him for which the community, whose doctrines he so long swayed, has any reason to respect his memory.[2] This seems like rather a strong statement, but there is doubtless much truth in it.

But if Pitt did not accomplish much in the way of concrete constructive measures, his contribution to the office of Prime Minister is of the utmost importance. The growth of the powers of the Cabinet, which had been interrupted since the fall of Walpole, now proceeded normally. During the seventeen years of Pitt's supremacy, the principle became fairly established that the Chief Minister of the Crown was the

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centre of authority, and that, while holding that authority nominally from the King, he exercised it by virtue of a mandate from the people. He led the Government in the Representative Chamber, which, like Walpole, Peel and Gladstone, but unlike Chatham and Beaconsfield, he steadily refused to leave. He was the mainspring of Governmental action, and formed a system and tradition of Government which could never be destroyed. In short, the position of Prime Minister was now definitely established.

Rose's comparison of Pitt to Robert Walpole is worthy of note. Pitt was far more than a second Walpole. Walpole wielded power as a nominee of the Whig Houses. Pitt was established in office by a wider and grander mandate. The General Election of 1784 ended the existing party system and shattered the rule of the Great Whig families who had hitherto dominated the Georgian Era. "The somnolent acquiescence of the populace in that headship now gave way to a more critical spirit, to a sense that the traditional parties must readjust themselves under a new leader."[1] The Election of 1784 eventually resulted in the emergence of a party which may be termed National.

The need of a Prime Minister in the Cabinet, and to lead the Government, was certainly not felt in 1783. The Duke of Grafton's statement to Shelburne, when asked to join his Ministry in 1787, saying that he would not

1 Rose, Part I, p. 177.

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consider Shelburne Prime Minister but only as holding the principal place in the Cabinet, is an indication of this fact. Grafton further declared, when the Duke of Rutland succeeded to a place in the Cabinet, that Shelburne had no right to make an addition to the Cabinet without consulting its members; he was making himself a "Prime Minister" by so doing. He was so wrathy at such a detestable situation that he resigned his office of Privy Seal. The fact that Fox and North later shared practical control of affairs, while the Duke of Portland succeeded to the Treasury, would also lead us to believe that the office of Prime Minister was not regarded as essential in 1783. Even twenty years later the same opinion was abroad, although to a much lesser extent. In 1803 Addington proposed a coalition with Pitt upon essentially the same basis which had existed with the Fox-North combination. The idea was that they should both be Secretaries of State, with a First Lord of the Treasury of no political importance, and that there should be no Prime Minister. Pitt's reaction proves conclusively his conception of the office. His view is stated in the letter of Lord Melville to Addington. It is an absolute necessity "in the conduct of the affairs of this country, that there should be an avowed and real minister, possessing the chief weight in the council, and the principal place in the confidence of the king. In that respect there can be no rivalry or division of power. That power must rest in the person generally called the First Minister, and that minister ought, he thinks, to be the person at the head of the

finances. ..... But still, if it should come unfortunately to such a radical difference of opinion that no spirit of conciliation or concession can reconcile, the sentiments of the minister must be allowed and understood to prevail, leaving the other members of administration to act as they may conceive themselves conscientiously called upon to act under the circumstances."[1]

1 Morley, pp. 162,163.
Morley quotes from Stanhope's Life of Pitt, iv, 24.

D. *Present Time*

I General Conception of Prime Minister Today

It was Pitt's long Ministry, the clearness with which he recognized his position, the absence from his Cabinet of any rival in intellectual ability, the tact with which he determined relations with the King, and, it must be added, the national centralization which came with a time of war — all these together — which brought the modern office of Prime Minister finally into existence. When the Cabinet must follow the Prime Minister as a unit, and when the King can no longer interfere with the policy of the Prime Minister who holds a position independent of him, the modern system is in operation.[1]

The Cabinet is now virtually a committee of the party which for the time has a majority in the Legislature, and the members of the committee who represent that party hold homogeneous views on the important issues of the politics of the day. So long as they command the support of a majority of the representative chamber, as expressed in its votes, or by the results of a General Election, they will continue to

1 Adams, p. 429.

B. Present Time

1. General Conception of Prime Minister Today

It was Pitt's long Ministry, the clearness with which he recognized his position, the absence from his Cabinet of any rival in intellectual ability, the test with which he determined relations with the King, and it must be added, the national reaction which came with a time of war — all these together — which brought the modern office of Prime Minister finally into existence. When the Cabinet must follow the Prime Minister as a unit, and when the King can no longer interfere with the policy of the Prime Minister who holds a position independent of him, the modern system is in operation.[1]

The Cabinet is now virtually a committee of the party which for the time has a majority in the Legislature, and the members of the committee who represent that party hold homogeneous views on the important issues of the politics of the day. So long as they command the support of a majority of the representative chamber, as expressed in its votes, or by the results of a General Election, they will continue to

1. Adams, p. 422.

hold office until their term is up. The Cabinets of today are usually selected from one party, although there have been coalitions of men of opposite parties. As a matter of fact the Cabinet of 1933 is a Coalition Cabinet, but it is presumably temporary. Pitt's Cabinet we may consider as representative of an Independent Party, rather than a strictly Tory group. The Prime Minister of today, as the leader of the party in power in the House of Commons, is the leader of the House itself. There is no doubt but what Pitt was the leader of the Lower House. When the Prime Minister finds he is not the leader of the House of Commons, or cannot command a majority there because his party has deserted him, or because it has lost its majority in the representative chamber, he is duty bound to resign his office. Pitt never found himself in this position, but there is ample evidence throughout the century that these doctrines had become an accepted part of Parliamentary Government long before 1800. So we have traced the evolution of Cabinet responsibility to Parliament.

The head of the Cabinet today is the Prime Minister, who is selected by the Crown, but who with its approval selects his colleagues. This custom was not definitely established until Peel's appointment to office in 1834. We have seen, however, how both Walpole and Pitt gained Ministers whom they desired after they became firmly entrenched in office. Pitt would not stand for Thurlow, and insisted upon having in his place Lord Loughborough, who, he thought, would

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be of service to him. Neither Pitt nor Walpole was in a strong enough position to demand the right of appointing their own Ministers when they first accepted office, because of their dependence upon Royal influence.

In the case of differences arising between the Departments it is to the Prime Minister that appeal lies, and the regular course for a Minister who is dissatisfied with his chief's decision is to retire. When a Prime Minister wishes a Minister's resignation he must first go to the Sovereign to procure assent; but that assent could never be refused to a Prime Minister with a Parliamentary majority, unless the Sovereign were prepared to take new Ministers and face a dissolution. Here we again cite the Thurlow dismissal; that was exactly the plan of action taken by Pitt. The King was given his choice, and he chose Pitt. In other words individual Ministerial responsibility is by 1800 an accepted part of Cabinet proceedure.

The power of the Prime Minister has been enhanced by the extension of the franchise. He has become more the direct choice of the people as the House of Commons has become more and more the reflection of popular opinion. The majority which supports a Minister in the House of Commons now is very different from that which supported him in the eighteenth century; he then, in the last resort, could appeal only to nomination boroughs and close corporations. The power of the modern Prime Minister is notinferior to that of a

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Dictator, provided that the House of Commons will stand by him. Ordinarily he leaves the heads of Departments to do their work in their own way. Ministers on important business always call him into Council. Foreign affairs must always be the matter of continuous thought in the mind of the Prime Minister, although they are not continuously before the Cabinet. Applying this definition to William Pitt, we must admit that he came pretty close to being a Prime Minister in the modern sense of the term. From 1792 on, by dint of his autocratic war measures at home, he was practically Dictator. How much departmental business he actually left to his colleagues we do not know, but we do know that he had efficient, if not brilliant, subordinates. Perhaps it is not assuming too much to say that he allowed them a certain amount of authority in their respective fields. It is certain that his hand guided the diplomatic relations of Great Britain at this time. We will remember that it was he who organized the coalitions against France until he broke under the terrific strain in 1806.

The custom is now, and was by 1800, secure that the Sovereign through his authorized agents will govern in accordance with the law and with the national will. Such attempts to intrigue the Sovereign against a colleague as were common with Carteret and Townshend, and as were afterward repeated with particular baseness by Lord Loughborough, when he secretly warned George III of Pitt's Catholic policy, are, we may be very confident, never likely to recur.

Although it may be unnecessary, we again feel compelled to remind the reader that the Cabinet and its Chief are the outstanding features of a Government based not on statute law, but on custom, convention, and convenience, whose raison d'être is to harmonize the exercise of the Royal prerogative of the Crown with the broad principle of Ministerial responsibility and with the powers and rights of a representative Legislature.

It is possible that within the next hundred years government by Parliament may undergo changes of substance as important as the changes since Sir Robert Walpole; but it is worthy of remark that living statesmen of evident experience and highest authority in the working of the English Constitutional system have declared that in their judgment the Cabinet, as a great organ of Government, has now found its final shape, attributes, function, and permanent ordering.[1]

1 Morley, p. 165.

Summary

The thesis is concerned with three periods: the first is from 1700 to 1770, the second from 1770 to 1783, and the third from 1783 to 1803. During the reign of Queen Anne, and from 1714 to 1721, there was no real Cabinet unity, although the office of Prime Minister was even then recognized by a few people of discernment in government circles.

The office of Prime Minister arose because of necessity; that is to say, the absence of the King from the meetings of the Cabinet made it imperative that there be a real leader in the Cabinet. Also, the long rule of the Whigs which now ensued, helped to weaken the Crown. This weakening naturally left the Prime Minister in a strong position.

Walpole is generally regarded as the first Prime Minister, although there were a few so-called Prime Ministers before him. He had considerable power before 1721, the date of the beginning of his administration. Officially, he became the First Lord of the Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

For a time, George I had the power of choosing his own Prime Ministers, but when Walpole came in, the King was soon forced to assume an unimportant place in the government. George II was likewise rendered subservient to Walpole. He was forced to accept Walpole as Prime Minister in 1727, and did not

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have the power of appointing his own Cabinet. Walpole strengthened his position by cultivating Royal favor.

Carteret, Walpole's successor, relied solely upon the Crown for his support and was forced to resign after a short administration.

It is a significant feature in the decline of royal power, that the King did not choose the Prime Minister in 1754.

William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, became Prime Minister on his own terms in 1756. However, in 1757, George II was at least consulted in the selection of Cabinet members. Between 1757 and 1760 George II was a nonentity in the government.

Under George III there was a definite effort to restore the power of the Crown by the Departmental system of government, for George III considered the King, and not the Prime Minister the real leader of the government. To be sure, he desired power for what he considered legitimate reasons. In 1761 George III favored Bute, rather than Pitt, and the latter was eventually forced to resign. Bute's character was not the type from which Prime Ministers are made, however. Fox's bribery of the House of Commons is significant, because it marks the beginning of George III's attempt to gain power. Bute prepared the way for the King's system. Grenville was given office because he was believed to be subservient to the King. Nevertheless, he had ideas of his own, and was disposed to be no mere puppet to the King. Consequently, he soon lost the sovereign's support, and was forced to resign.

George III had greatly increased his authority between 1760 and 1765, largely by means of the "King's Friends". Pitt's refusal to ally himself with Rockingham forther strengthened the position of the King. Nevertheless, George III was forced to accept an objectionable Cabinet under Rockingham in 1765. The monarch received an additional boost in 1767 because of Chatham's disjointed Cabinet. George III's rise continued under the administration of Grafton who resigned from office in 1770 because of the lack of support from the Crown.

Walpole chose to rule by Parliamentary support, but he also saw the Cabinet as being closely related to the Lower House. He recognized the importance of the House of Commons, and used corruption to secure its support. He believed that the Prime Minister should lead the House of Commons. He gave heed to public opinion on the Excise Tax, but did not resign from office. He also failed to resigh during the war question of 1739, although by that time he had lost public opinion. He finally resigned in 1742 when he perceived that he had lost the support of the Lower House. His influence upon the office of Prime Minister was undoubtedly greater than that of any other man.

Nobody wanted a Prime Minister in 1742, but Carteret attempted to fill that position. He lacked a majority in the House of Commons, and this was the principal cause of his early fall from power.

The affair of 1746, during the Pelham administration,

proved the power of a united Ministry supported by the House of Commons. Pelham succeeded in keeping the opposition powerless by the use of bribes, even as Walpole had done.

Newcastle was forced to resign in 1756 because he was not the actual leader of the House of Commons. Pitt (Chatham) became Prime Minister in 1757, largely because of his popularity although he was not the leader of the House of Commons. He was dismissed because he could not command a majority in that Chamber, in 1757, and to regain his power, was forced to make an alliance with Newcastle. In 1758 Pitt maintained supremacy in Parliament by taking any powerful opponents into the cabinet. However, the King and Bute gained control of Parliament.

Bute was not the real leader of the House of Commons, and was terrifically unpopular with the people. Consequently his early dismissal was inevitable.

The Rockingham Ministry was seriously weakened because of the refusal of Pitt to join it. His influence in the House of Commons would have made the Cabinet invincible.

Chatham lost much of his popularity when he accepted a peerage in 1766. He was not really Prime Minister, however, because he refused to rely upon party. That George III's power was at this time fairly well established, is evinced by his manipulation of the House of Commons.

Grafton's resignation was partly caused because of his lack of influence in the Lower House.

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By 1770, due to the immense corruption used, public opinion was not a potent factor in the government.

Walpole was not completely successful in establishing Cabinet unity, but did establish the precedent of ousting rebel Ministers. These Cabinet outcasts, however, eventually overthrew Walpole in the House of Commons. There was dissension in the Walpole Cabinet by 1739, and this dissension was a factor in his resignation in 1742. As we have said, Walpole's effect on the Cabinet system in general, was profound. The "Inner Cabinet" was a feature of his method of government. Cabinet Government, as we know it today, was well established by 1742.

With the advent of Carteret, there were few changes made in the Cabinet. Pelham's Cabinet was also a coalition. He did not possess a great amount of authority over his colleagues, and there was much dissension throughout his administration.

Newcastle chose to conciliate rather than rule his Ministers, and even allowed them to vote against government proposals.

During the Chatham Administration, the Grenvilles were taken in to avoid their opposition. Chatham maintained his superiority in the Cabinet, however, until 1760, when dissension occurred. At that time it is fairly certain that a united Cabinet could have thwarted the ambitious George III.

There was much dissension under Bute, and this was

partly the cause of his resignation.

Due to circumstances, Grenville had no rival as Prime Minister. The dissension in the Rockingham Cabinet was due, in a large measure, to the company of "King's Friends".

By 1760, the Cabinet system was still further along the road to maturity than it had been in 1742. It is interesting to note that peers predominated the personnel of the Cabinets of the first half of the eighteenth century.

From 1770 to 1783 we are concerned especially with the activities of George III. By 1770, because of the "King's Friends", he was very powerful, and was actually the head of his own party. His intentions were of the best, and he felt he was backed up by the laws of the nation. In theory, he was correct; in practice, he was wrong.

Lord North was powerful, as Prime Minister, in the House of Commons, chiefly because of the power of the King. Between 1778 and 1782, George III was simply obstinate in his retention of power; he would not permit North to resign. Eventually, North did resign. He left the office considerably weakened in prestige because of his character. There were several reasons why George III's plan of government failed: one of the most immediate was the failure to suppress the American Revolution.

In 1782, the King was forced to accept an objectionable Prime Minister in the person of Rockingham, together with an equally objectionable Cabinet. Rockingham died in 1782

and Shelburne, through the King's power, came into office. He proved to be a mere puppet to the King.

George III was forced to accept the Fox-North Coalition in 1783, although it had been formed with the express purpose of weakening the Crown. George III naturally enough, opposed the coalition, and eventually overthrew it.

North was Prime Minister in name only. Few changes in the Cabinet were necessary when he came into office. He was supreme in this Cabinet due to the support of the King. Nevertheless dissension arose in the Cabinet in 1780.

A significant aspect of the Rockingham administration was that the whole Cabinet changed with a change in the office of Prime Minister; this was the first time this had occurred.

There was discord in both the Shelburne and the Fox-North Cabinets, and this accounts for their short duration.

From 1783 to 1803 the office of Prime Minister was restored to its former position of authority in the British government. The forceful personality of William Pitt, the Younger, was an important factor in this re-establishment. Pitt came into office on the strength of George III's power, but soon it was clear that he was more powerful than the King. After a long administration, he resigned because of the Catholic question in Ireland. We find, however, even so late as 1804, that the King was still influential in selecting the Cabinet.

Pitt's relation to the House of Commons is interest-

ing. He came into office without a majority, and did not have a real following in the Lower House until after the General Election of 1784. Pitt, like Walpole, was inclined to sacrifice principles for power. He was not entirely sure of a majority, even from 1786 to 1788. All these factors indicate that ministerial responsibility to Parliament was not yet firmly established. Pitt did not rule by party alone, but he was instrumental in bringing out the two party system. By 1794, as Prime Minister, he was recognized as the leader of the Tories. Although he ruled over a Coalition Cabinet, Pitt was an absolute Prime Minister; he was similar to Walpole in this respect. Although his administration did not accomplish much in constructive measures, Pitt firmly established the office of Prime Minister. Pitt's own conception of the office was well formulated in 1803.

Today, the general conception of the Cabinet and the Prime Minister is much the same as it was in 1803; the powers of both are merely amplified. The Prime Minister is a dictator so long as he controls a majority in the House of Commons. The subservience of the Prime Minister to the King is a purely nominal affair. Although the whole system is based on custom, and not law, it is nevertheless secure.

Prime Ministers between 1721 and 1801

Sir Robert Walpole - 1721 - 1742

Lord John Carteret - 1742 - 1744

Henry Pelham-1744 - 1754

Duke of Newcastle - 1754 - 1756

Duke of Devonshire and William Pitt - 1756 - 1757

William Pitt and the Duke of Newcastle - 1757 - 1762

Earl of Bute - 1762 - 1763

George Grenville - 1763 - 1765

Marquis of Rockingham - 1765 - 1766

Wm. Pitt, the Earl of Chatham - 1766 - 1767

Duke of Grafton - 1767 - 1770

Lord North - 1770 - 1782

Marquis of Rockingham - 1782

Earl of Shelburne - 1782 - 1783

Duke of Portland, Lord North and Charles Fox,
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William Pitt, the Younger - 1783 - 1801.

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